THE EMERGENCE OF SEMANTICS IN FOUR LINGUISTIC TRADITIONS

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The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions
Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic

THE EMERGENCE OF SEMANTICS IN FOUR LINGUISTIC TRADITIONS

HEBREW, SANSKRIT, GREEK, ARABIC

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PREFACE

In 1993 the authors of this book came together for the first time in the office of one of them at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. We knew each other from our publications in the field of the history of linguistics in various languages and were intrigued by the coexistence in one small country of specialists in four diverse linguistic traditions. The purpose of our meeting was to explore the possibility of finding a common theme in our respective traditions and publishing our ideas on this theme in a collective volume. It soon turned out that the common denominator in the four traditions involved, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Arabic, was the presence of a corpus of revealed or revered texts, which gave rise to the development of linguistic and hermeneutic studies. The question which the authors formulated was: How did the development of semantic theory intereact with the specific corpus cherished in each tradition?

Since we were all living reasonably close to each other, we decided to discuss these problems regularly and to submit the successive versions of our own sections of the intended book to each other's scrutiny. This turned out to be a successful way of developing new insights: by discussing the role of semantics in the other three traditions the authors were forced to re-evaluate their ideas on their 'own' tradition. Even though travel schedules to India, the United States, Israel and the Arab world did not always synchronize and it was sometimes hard even within a small country to arrange meetings, the authors managed to stay in touch either in person or by telephone and we are very proud to be able to present our collective effort in book form to the reader. The authors are responsible for their own section, but we bear a collective responsibility for the final chapter in which a brief synthesis is attempted of the results of our study.

The authors wish to express their thanks in the first place to each other for an innovating experiment in cooperation and mutual stimulation. We are very grateful to the publisher, John Benjamins, and to the editor of the series, Konrad Koerner, for their trust in this enterprise. Jan Houben wishes to thank

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Part One

THE HEBREW TRADITION

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"And if you think I have not understood the meaning of your message, you do not simply repeat it in the same words, you try to explain it in different words, different from the ones you used originally; but then the *it* is no longer the *it* you started with."

David Lodge, *Small World*, 1984, p. 25

1. Introduction

"Linguistic description minus grammar equals semantics" (Katz & Fodor 1963: 170). This general dictum is occasionally cited in order to assert the chaotic role of meaning and definition of meaning in grammar and language studies. Although modern scholarship has difficulties in finding adequate ways of discussing semantics in general, there still is and always has been great concern about the basic characteristics of human language involving the many dimensions of what is called meaning.

In the Hebrew tradition one sacred, canonized religious text played a fundamental part in shaping the issue under discussion: the Hebrew Bible. The Bible, specifically the first five books known as the *Tōrāh*, "Teaching", "Instruction", served as an authoritative source of tradition and law. As a sacred text it was read and taught in the original Hebrew and maintained its fundamental role in Jewish culture. In the Graeco-Roman period, Greek and Aramaic translations of the biblical books were made and used. A short description of the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible is given in Section 3. This section also includes a discussion of those interpretation procedures within the biblical books that imply a concept of meaning.

The biblical writings needed to be explained and understood in the subsequent periods of rabbinic and medieval Judaism, in which each generation wished to make the biblical text vocal and meaningful anew.
To a large extent, the rabbis were involved in the study and practical application of the biblical teachings. Section 4 comprises an overview of the hermeneutical models in the rabbinic exegetical tradition and their consequences for the understanding of meaning.

Section 5 addresses the new approach to biblical interpretation of Saadiah Gaon (882–942), who took a deep interest in Hebrew grammar and philology. Saadiah wrote commentaries on a number of biblical books and translated the Bible into Arabic, showing his close links to the surrounding culture of Islam. His approach to meaning exercised an important influence on medieval Jewish scholarship, particularly in biblical commentaries and philological studies. In the same period we find the Karaites, a group of thinkers who were exceedingly creative in biblical exegesis, polemics and historical writings. The Karaites accepted a strongly rationalist orientation in their comprehension of the biblical text. They generally rejected traditional rabbinic interpretation and challenged contemporary Jewish leadership. Their views are relevant to the study of meaning and will be discussed here.

Section 6 concentrates mainly on the person of Moses Maimonides (1135/8–1204) who integrated semantic observations in his (theo)logical and philosophical thought. In his search for the true ways of interpretation Maimonides deals with aspects of meaning. Both his theories and the reactions of later commentators are discussed in this section.

Finally, some provisional conclusions are presented in Section 7, suggestions for further reading are offered in Section 8, and a list of bibliographical references concludes this part.

2. Terminology

The earliest terms in Hebrew with a connotation of "meaning" are found in the major works of the post-biblical Jewish tradition, the *Mišnāh*, the Babylonian and the Palestinian *Talmūd*, and the *Midrāšīm*. During the Rabbinic Period (200 BCE–500 CE) the increasing interpretive activities of the rabbis concerning the text of Hebrew Scripture stimulated the development of technical means of expression (Bacher 1965). Some of these designations originated in Hebrew Scripture and were granted a long life in both the rabbinic and medieval exegetical traditions as well as in the science of Hebrew language and grammar. The biblical word *śēḵel*, "sense, intelligence" (Neh. 8: 8) was used in the Middle Ages as a rather abstract conception to refer to true reason or intellectual cognition, also in connection with the semantic level of language as an equivalent of the Arabic word *ʿaql*, "sense", "mind", "reason".

The most famous example of such a term is the word *ʿinyān*. The word occurs several times in the book of Ecclesiastes in the sense of "affair",

"business", but once introduced within the exegetical context the same word is extremely often employed as a reference to the "content" of a biblical word or verse or to the "subject matter" of a larger text. Hebrew lexicographers in the 10th and 11th centuries selected *ʿinyān* as the technical Hebrew word for "meaning" and in translations of Arabic-written linguistic studies on Hebrew the term was used as a calque of *maʿnā*, the Arabic expression for "meaning". Later grammarians discussed the interplay of concept and word, and opposed "meaning" to "word" or "expression" using *ʿinyān* and a variety of terms: *lāšōn*, "language", "expression", *šēm*, "name", "noun", "word", *millāh*, "utterance", "word" and *dāvār*, "thing", "word".

The Aramaic noun *ʿīqār* was employed by the rabbis both in its literal sense as "root" (according to Daniel 4: *ʿīqār šŏršōhī*, "the taproot of its roots") and in an exegetical context as "main aspect", "essence", "substance". This word appears in linguistic literature with the connotation of "first meaning", "simple meaning". There is no clear-cut distinction between the terms *ʿīqār* and *šoreš*, although the latter is commonly used as "grammatical root", "radix", and occasionally signifies "lexical meaning". The word *ṭaʿam* was already found in Hebrew Scripture denoting "taste", "sense" and in Aramaic biblical translations (*Targūmīm*) with the meaning of "reason", "argument". The word is very popular in Talmudic argumentation; in later linguistic and philosophical works *ṭaʿam* is often employed for "notion", "sense" (Klatzkin 1928: 18–19).

Ṭaʿam is also relevant to the writings of Maimonides (1135–1204) who discussed the *ṭᵃʿᵃmēy hammiẓwōt*, the "reasons for the commandments", in his work *Mišneh Tōrāh*, "Repetition of the Torah". He also contributes to the discussion about meaning in his famous *Mōreh Hannĕvūḵīm*, the "Guide of the Perplexed", by discerning an 'external' and 'internal' meaning, also formulated as plain and concealed meaning. This opposition is often expressed by couples: in the Arabic original *ẓāhir*, "external", "obvious" / *bāṭin*, "inner", "hidden" or *ẓāhir/ḫafīy*, "concealed", corresponding to the Hebrew renderings *pāšūṭ*, "plain" / *tāweḵ*, "inner", or *nigleh*, "revealed", "visible" / *nistār*, "concealed", "invisible".

Apart from these terms two key concepts and their derivatives can be taken as representing different semantic dimensions at an interpretive level. These concepts are represented by the nouns *pĕšāṭ* and *dĕrāš*, the current terms for "literal" and "derived" meaning, respectively. Talmudic literature employs the terms *pĕšāṭ*, *pĕšāṭā* and *pāšūṭ* with the literal notion of "extending" or

"flattening" which developed into the sense of "straight", "simple". Similarly, the use of the term *Pĕšiṭṭā* for the Syriac Bible version can be seen as related to this notion. The root *pšṭ* also acquired the meaning of explaining the biblical text according to a more concrete or plain sense. Here lies its distinction from the root *drš* denoting a method of exegetical techniques which lead to deduced or derivative explanation of the biblical text. The latter method became normative in rabbinic Judaism and the system of *midrāš* pervaded rabbinic practice and thought. In this article the terminology of *pĕšāṭ* and *dĕrāš* is specifically taken as a guideline for illuminating exegetical and linguistic implications of meaning in predominantly the rabbinic and medieval Hebrew traditions.

3. Intra-Biblical Tradition

The history of semantic evaluation in Hebrew can by no means be isolated from the history of the books of the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament, most of which are written in Classical Hebrew, with the exception of some relatively small parts written in Aramaic. The books of the Hebrew Bible constitute a composite source which covers a millennium of literary and linguistic development. Notwithstanding the hybrid character of the Hebrew language, the Bible is viewed as a closed literary corpus which has set its indelible imprint on the entirety of Jewish and Christian traditions alike. Its text essentially expresses the religious dimensions of the monotheistic concept and its books were written by Hebrews or Israelites or Judeans who were settled in Palestine and adhered to the worship of one God. National and religious life were closely connected in faith and practice, in law and worship. The existence of the Hebrews was based upon laws that formulated ceremonial and ritualistic matters as well as the practical and religious aspects of life. These laws were viewed as the fulfilment of God's commandments. Essentially, the priests, kings and prophets were commanded to proclaim the divine teachings and to implement them in religion and society. At times this proved to be difficult.

The recording of ancient legislation, biographies and sayings of prophets and kings, and traditional narratives continued despite the radical changes in the political status of the Jews. During many centuries scribes were active in writing and keeping the records and traditions of ancient Israel in literary Hebrew. The textual tradition of these books as represented in many ancient and medieval sources is a long and complicated process. Most scholars agree

that from the 2nd century CE onwards the consonantal framework was fixed to a great extent (Tov 1992: 134–44). Scribal changes generally reflect actual mistakes, but, in some instances, the scribes intentionally altered the text in order to create an additional meaning that cannot be overlooked. A famous example is the replacement of the theophoric element *-baʿal* ("Baal") by the derogatory element *-bōšet* ("shame"), e.g., the proper name for the son of Saul which is Eshbaal in 1 Chr. 8: 33 alongside Ishbosheth in 2 Sam. 2: 8. Early-10th-century CE scholars and scribes known as Masoretes endeavoured to safeguard and to record the consonantal text through the addition of an apparatus, predominantly including annotations and observations on orthography. The main development of this apparatus of the Massorah (literally: "handing down") was connected with the activity of the Ben Asher family in Tiberias. This also involved vocalization and accentuation. The Ben Asher version became the authoritative Masoretic text accepted by all sections of the Jewish people. This version of the Hebrew Bible has always functioned as the textus receptus for any linguistic analysis in traditional Hebrew philology (Dotan 1971: 1401–82; Yeivin 1980).

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (after 538 BCE) a specific compilation of Hebrew scriptural writings was the basis for the reconstruction of Jewish existence. This compilation which represented "the law of the God of heaven" was called *Tōrāh* (Rendtorff 1984: 165–84). The ritualistic reintroduction of the Torah by Ezra was accompanied by one striking development as can be learnt from Neh. 8: 8: "And they read from the book, from the Torah of God, with interpretation (*mĕfōrāš*); and they gave the sense (*śeḵel*), so that people might understand the reading." Three conclusions can be drawn from Ezra's activities, pertaining to our interest: firstly, "a scroll of the Torah of Moses", a written document, was extant to be taught and promulgated as a guarantee for the preservation of national and religious identity of Israel involving the entire Judean populace, both men and women; secondly, this scroll was consecrated on a solemn occasion in Jerusalem which clearly stresses the sacrosanct status of its text; thirdly, a number of leading scribes and levites went about among the people expounding or interpreting the Torah to them.

The interpretation of Hebrew Scripture since Ezra's days seems to have operated in the first place at the level of lexical equivalence as a result of the widening gap between literary language and everyday speech. In the late days of the Babylonians another language, Aramaic, was on the rise and became the official language with the establishment of the Persian empire. The Judean

returnees who had been exposed to an Aramaic cultural and linguistic environment during their exile in Babylonia, would use Aramaic, whereas the local Judeans held on to Hebrew. Soon thereafter, the linguistic situation of the Jewish community became complicated by the growing influence of Aramaic in literature and every-day communication. Literary Hebrew was in continued use in religious works mainly from a sense of veneration for the Hebrew Bible books of pre-exilic times. However, books composed in this type of Hebrew language were far from homogeneous, sharing characteristics with both earlier biblical language and contemporary Aramaic. Similarly, colloquial Hebrew was noticeably influenced by Aramaic (Chomsky 1957: 30–1; Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 112–16). The Pharisees, the lay experts of the Torah, sought to present their teachings in the language of the spoken vernacular. This language evolved into a literary idiom of its own in what is defined as Rabbinic Hebrew.

The phenomenon of interpretation was not "invented" by Ezra and his scribes and priests. Fishbane (1985; 1989) has demonstrated that the Hebrew Bible has an exegetical dimension in its own right. Ancient Israelite legislation is presented in various parts of the Torah, but it is often restated or alluded to in other books of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, in all its strata the entire scriptural text exhibits traces of biblical linguistic speculation in various forms: direct explanation as in Gen. 2: 23: "She shall be called "woman" (*'īšāh*) because she was taken out of "man" (*'īš*)" (*lĕzōt yiqqārē 'īšāh kī mē'īš luqāḥāh zōt*) and intrabiblical parallel versions like the famous example of the Decalogue in Ex. 20 and Deut. 5 with essential differences in formulation (Greenberg 1990: 83–119). Generally speaking, the book of Deuteronomy in its entirety can be regarded as a recapitulation and interpretation of the four books which precede it. Later scribal glosses that explain personal or geographical names and translations of biblical texts into Aramaic and Greek such as the Targumim and the Septuagint as well as into other ancient languages bear witness to early interpretive processes. As has been shown by Fishbane, these more intricate ways of exegesis within the biblical corpus are of great importance for the understanding of semantic changes and developments in ancient days.

4. Rabbinic exegetical Tradition

In the rabbinic tradition, the name of Ezra became the outstanding symbol of the activities of later scribes and sages who continued teaching Torah and

establishing ordinances on the basis of its exegesis. Retrospectively, this process was a crucial phase in the formative stages of rabbinic Judaism during the so-called "Period of the Second Temple" (458 BCE–70 CE), because the study of Torah and the development of a complex of legislative rulings known as *Hᵃlāḵāh* (literally: "the ongoing", i.e., the way of life of Israel) ceased to be the exclusive affair of the priests and became the concern of men who did not belong to the priestly caste. While the number of priests among the sages remained considerable, there were many Torah teachers and interpreters who did not belong to priesthood. The rules instituted by the sages or rabbis were accepted as binding and gained currency among the entire nation. These sages were to become the mainstay of the emerging rabbinic movement, which became most influential in the later Hellenistic and Roman period of the Second Temple (Pelletier 1986: 63–72;181–263).

The ethical teachings and legislative decisions of the sages were shaped and transmitted orally. The concept of an oral tradition was perceived in rabbinic literature as oral teaching in contradistinction to the fixed laws of the written Torah. This tradition contained the ordinances of Pharisaic sages in the Second Temple Period and their successors, the rabbis from the first five centuries CE. Oral Torah was finally preserved in the written form in which we know it: rabbinic literature (Safrai 1987: 35–120). The rabbis were aware of the innovative character of their search for decisions and specifications on the basis of the written text, but their activities demanded legitimization. In rabbinic sources we therefore encounter the idea, that oral traditions were handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai as an "Oral Torah" (*Tōrāh šebbĕʿal peh*) along with the "Written Torah" (*Tōrāh šebbiḵtāv*, Ex. 19). The conception of a "dual Torah", revealed at Sinai in a written and an oral form, also covered the areas of learning of every rabbi and student in future generations, enabling the rabbis to see themselves as continuing and re-enacting the revelation of the Torah to the people at Sinai. Their interpretive creativity and its results were considered parts of the chain of Torah tradition and provided the continuity of its transmission and development (Jacobs 1964: 281–84).

Torah as well as other writings of Israelite antiquity were taught and interpreted by means of a range of exegetical techniques generally defined as *dĕrāš* or *midrāš*. These words derive from a Hebrew root *drš* with the meaning of "searching" or "enquiring". Midrash is the general term for the investigation of Scripture and at the same time the name for a literary genre of what could be called biblical studies among rabbinic writings. The means

and modes of investigation varied. Within the system of biblical exegesis the allegorical approach and exposition with the aid of etymological evidence were important options.

Allegoresis as well as etymologization were mostly used as exegetical devices leading to an applied meaning of a given word or phrase, in itself giving way to further expositions. An early example of a combination between plain meaning and explicit allegorical exegesis is found in a 3rd-century composition of halakhic Midrash, the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael:

> "For three days they went in the wilderness and found no water" (Ex. 15: 22). Rabbi Joshua says: "This has to be taken literally (*kišĕmūʿō* – "as it is heard")..." Those who search for metaphors said: "They found no water, they did not find words of Torah which are likened to water. And whence do we know that the words of Torah are likened to water? It is said: "Lo, every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Is. 55: 1) It was because they were separated from the words of Torah for three days that they became rebellious." "
> (*wayyēlḵū šĕlōšāh yāmīm bammidbār wĕlō māẓ'ū mayim rabbī Yĕhōšuaʿ 'ōmēr kišĕmūʿō... dōrĕšēy rĕšūmōt 'āmrū wĕlō māẓ'ū mayim divrēy Tōrāh šennimšĕlū lĕmayim ūminnāyin šennimšĕlū lĕmayim šenn*^{e}*'*^{e}*mār hōy kol ẓāmē lĕḵū lammayim lĕfīy šeppāršū middivrēy Tōrāh šĕlōšet yāmīm lĕḵāḵ mārdū*) (Neziqin 1,154)

As an established parable (*māšāl*), "water" routinely became a metaphor for the words of Torah in the explanation of certain biblical verses (Lauterbach 1910–11, 291–333, 503–531). Some Talmudic rabbis give the impression that the first meaning of the term is replaced by its symbolic meaning. The same development can be observed with regard to the two protagonists of the book of Canticles, the standard example of allegorical explanation in Judaism. The identification of the loving boy and girl with God and the community of Israel was well established in midrashic interpretation (Stern 1991: 9–13).

The preoccupation with etymology was first and foremost indebted to indications within the biblical text itself, particularly applied to proper names and place-names as we have seen in the preceding chapter with regard to Gen. 2: 23. Sometimes equivalent etymologies are found for one and the same proper name as in Gen. 25: 26: "And his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel (*ʿāqēv*); so his name was called Jacob (*Y*^{aʿa}*qōv*)" (*wĕyādō 'ōḥezet b*^{aʿa}*qēv ʿĒśāw wayyiqrā šĕmō Y*^{aʿa}*qōv*) alongside Gen. 27: 36: "Is he not rightly named Jacob (*Y*^{aʿa}*qōv*)? For he has supplanted me (*wayyaʿqĕvēnī*) these two times" (*h*^{a}*ḵi qārā š*^{e}*mō Y*^{aʿa}*qōv wayyaʿqĕvēnī zeh p*^{aʿa}*mayim*). These and similar explanations of intrabiblical name- and noun-etymology legitimized the much wider use of this type of interpretation by the rabbis for the Hebrew

Bible, often leading to unexpected conclusions (Barr 1961: 158–160; 1966: 108–115):

> "Rabbi Akiba expounded: When husband (*'īš*) and wife (*'īšāh*) are worthy, the Divine Presence abides with them; when they are not worthy, fire (*'ēš*) consumes them." (*dĕraš Rabbī 'Aqīvā 'īš wĕ'īšāh zāḵū šĕḵīnāh bēynēyhem lo zāḵū 'ēš 'ōḵaltān*) (Babylonian Talmud, *Ṣoṭah* 17a)

The morphological similarity of the nouns *'īš* and *'ēš* explains the background of this etymological pun. Many etymological observations of the sages were based upon the existence of a common phonological factor between words, without any relation to their origin. The methods of etymologization start off with an essentially synchronic understanding of the Hebrew language and do not take into account its linguistic intricacies. Such treatment of words has its roots far back in the history of Semitic literature; it seemed very natural because most Hebrew names were meaningful phrases just as other phrases of the language.

Moreover, in their comparative etymologies the rabbis easily related Hebrew and Greek without distinguishing a Semitic language from a non-Semitic language, as can be illustrated from the explanation on Gen. 49: 5: "Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords" (Hebrew: *mĕḵērōtēyhem*). In *Midrash Tanḥuma Wayyĕḥīy* 9 a view is recorded, which sees in the Hebrew word a Greek word of similar sound, *machaira* or *machairēs*: "It is Greek, in which "swords" are called *mĕḵīrīn*, "knives", "daggers" " (*mĕḵērōtēyhem yĕwānī hū šeqōrīn lĕḥ^{a}r^{a}vōt mĕḵīrīn*) (1960: 59; Barr 1983: 57). In another etymology, found in Midrash Genesis Rabbah, a statement is made on the meaning of the name Allon Bacuth (Gen. 35: 8). Literally it means "the Oak of Weeping", but Rabbi Nehunyah takes the first noun for the Greek word *allon* meaning "another" (*Rabbī Nĕḥūnyāh 'āmar lāšōn yĕwānīt 'allōn*) and applies the name of the place to the situation of Jacob who heard that his mother Rebecca had died while he was mourning for her nurse Deborah (Genesis Rabbah 81,5; 976). Similar comparative etymologies involved a more closely related language like Arabic, occasionally leading to relevant comparisons as in Genesis Rabbah 87,1; 1061 where Rabbi Levi explains the meaning of the word *pĕtāyim* ("young man", "youth", sing. *petīy*; Prov. 7: 7) with the aid of the Arabic noun *fatā* which means the same.

Many midrashic works came into existence: the application of midrash methodology is already visible in Philo's work and in the Qumran writings (Brooke 1985: 36–44), and specifically in the main products of halakhic

codification of the 2nd and 5th centuries respectively, the Mishnah and the Talmud (Stemberger 1989). The methods of midrash developed into an elaborate system of hermeneutic principles, fixed at a certain number, and attributed to a prominent sage. A basic list of seven principles was ascribed to Hillel, the most distinguished Palestinian teacher from the 1st century BCE. This list does not encapsulate all techniques used in rabbinic midrash, but it shows how explanations of scriptural passages can be drawn from other scriptural passages ("Bible explained by Bible", Samely 1991: 39–67):

1. An inference *a minori ad maius* or *a fortiori*, a simple way of argumentation which exists in many methods of logic, permitting deduction from a minor to a major case or the reverse. The use of this principle is found in the biblical text itself, e.g., Ex. 6: 12: "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me?"
2. The method of analogy, an inference *ex analogia*. The name for this rule current in rabbinic writings is *gĕzērāh šāwāh*, literally meaning "equal decision".
3. A main proposition from one biblical passage or a derivation of a legal axiom from a single text.
4. A derivation of a legal axiom from two similar passages, very reminiscent of the second rule. This principle is in fact another way of establishing comparability between legal statements provided that they share a common factor.
5. A more precise definition of the general by means of the particular, and of the particular by means of the general. This principle is based on the premise that if a general prescription is followed by specification, further application of the prescription will be determined by the terms of the specification. The same is true for the obverse of this principle, but in its legal application there is no question of extending the specific prescription to a general law.
6. A more precise definition of one passage with the help of another. This hermeneutic rule seems to be less fixed than the others mentioned in this traditional list. It was commonly employed for exegetical purposes, often introduced with the formula "similarly, you say" (*kayyōẓē bō 'attāh 'ōmēr*).
7. Definition of a passage from its subject or argumentation with the help of context. The purpose of this relatively unspecified rule is to interpret a prescription or the semantic aspects of a biblical word by its larger context.

The importance of the second principle is demonstrated by Lieberman. According to him it is evident that the term corresponds to the Greek concept

of *súnkrisis pròs íson*, the technical term for "a comparison with something equal" in the works of Greek rhetors like Aphthonius, Sardianus and Hermogenes, who all flourished in the 2nd century CE as contemporaries of famous rabbis (1962: 58–60). The word *súnkrisis* in the sense of 'comparison' was already employed as a logical term in the *Metaphysica* of Aristotle. The same word is also found in the Septuagint signifying "decree, decision". In rabbinic hermeneutics this rule may be defined as the most obvious principle for semantic clarification: when the meaning of a word is unclear, it is inferred by analogy from another passage where the meaning is clear. In an exposition of Ps. 103: 20 ("The mighty in strength that fulfil his word") it is argued that this verse does not speak of such as observe the Sabbatical Year, but the commentator refers to another passage in order to refute this:

> "It is said here: "That fulfil his word" (*dāvār*), and it is said elsewhere: "And this is the manner (*dāvār*) of the release" [Deut. 15: 2]. Since by *dāvār* used in the latter passage Scripture means the observance of the Sabbatical Year, so also by *dāvār* used in the former passage Scripture means the observance of the Sabbatical Year." *(wĕ'im tōmar še'ēynō mĕdabbēr bĕšōmrēy šĕvī'īt n^{e}'^{e}mār kān 'ōśēy dĕvārō wĕn^{e}'^{e}mār lĕhālān wĕzeh dĕvar haššĕmiṭṭāh mah dāvār hā'āmūr lĕhālān bĕšōmrēy šĕvī'īt hakkātūv mĕdabbēr 'af dāvār hā'āmūr kān bĕšōmrēy šĕvī'īt hakkātūv mĕdabbēr*) (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 1,1; 4–5)

The rabbis were afraid that the use of this rule could lead to any desired conclusion without logical basis since the biblical text exhibits numerous identical words in different sentences. Therefore they stipulated that no one is permitted to draw conclusions on his own initiative unless he learned them from the authoritative tradition. The definition of word identity became a matter of traditional knowledge about certain key words found in two related biblical passages.

The seven rules were expanded and specified in the thirteen rules of rabbi Ishmael which in time came to be the most authoritative list of devices, and the thirty-two rules of rabbi Eliezer, son of Yose the Galilean (Stemberger 1982: 25–40). The three traditional lists embody what may be regarded as the normative "measures" (*middōt*) of rabbinic hermeneutics, but many other devices were employed. One of the most important is a principle, close to analogy (*gĕzērāh šāwāh*), known as *heqqēš* ("comparison"; the literal equivalent of Greek *paráthesis*). A famous example of direct analogy with semantic implications can be found in the *Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael* on Ex.21: 24 ("Eye for eye"):

> "Eye for eye: [it means] money. You say [it means] money? Perhaps this is nothing but a real eye? Rabbi Ishmael used to say: "Behold [the text] says: He who hits a beast shall

make it good; and he who hits a man shall be put to death" [Lev. 24: 21]. Scripture compared (*hiqqīš*) injuries of man to injuries of beasts, and injuries of beasts to injuries of man. Just as injuries of beasts are liable to pecuniary compensation, so are injuries of man liable to pecuniary compensation."
(*ʿāyin taḥat ʿāyin māmōn ʾattāh ʾōmēr māmōn ʾō ʾēynō ʾellā ʿāyin mammāš hāyāh Rabbī Yišmāʿēl ʾōmēr hᵃrēy hū ʾōmēr ūmakkēh vĕhēmāh yĕšallĕmennāh ūmakkēh ʾādām yūmāt hiqqīš hakkātūv nizqēy ʾādām lĕnizqēy vĕhēmāh wĕnizqēy vĕhēmāh lĕnizqēy ʾādām mah nizqēy vĕhēmāh lĕtašlūmīn af nizqēy ʾādām lĕtašlūmīn*) (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Nĕzīqīn 5,277)

The consequences of such an inference are considerable: plain meaning has turned into secondary meaning by means of an exegetical twist which hardly strikes us as a matter of logic. By expounding the full range of supposed implicit meanings the rabbis create their own semantics of the Hebrew Bible, especially when it comes to the complex of non-legal, historiographical and ethical teachings, the *ʾAggādāh* or *Haggādāh*. The development of this type of narrative literature is mostly built upon imaginative, textual interpretation whose objective it is to gain a secondary meaning of biblical words and verses. However, in midrashic exposition the sages occasionally demonstrate some commitment to lexical meaning. Traditionally two terms are found classifying literal and non-literal interpretation: *pĕšāṭ*, the designation for plain meaning, and *dĕrāš*, for meaning as a result of hermeneutic deduction (Gertner 1962: 1–27). Plain meaning attracted the attention of the sages and was even taught by them as can be illustrated in the expressions *pĕšāṭēyh dĕqārā* ("the plain wording of the text") or *ʾōrḥā dĕqārā* ("the way of the text") (Bacher 1965: 170–73 ; Gelles 1981: 3–7; Halivni 1991: 63–74). In the Mishnah five terms are used which are usually understood as indicators of literal interpretation:

1. *mišmaʿ*, lit. "hearing", "what can be heard of it", mostly: *kĕmišmāʿō* – "in its obvious sense";
2. *wadday*, "certain", "real": "means in reality";
3. *mammāš*, "substantial", "real": "actually meaning";
4. *pērēš hakkātūv*, "Scripture has explicitly stated";
5. *dĕvārīm kiḵĕtāvām*, "words as they are written": "ad litteram".

The difference between literal and derived meaning is demonstrated in the following example:

"The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, "what man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house" [Deut. 20: 8]. Rabbi Akiba says: "Fearful and fainthearted" – in its usual sense (*kĕmišmāʿō*): he cannot endure the armies

joined in battle or bear to see a drawn sword." Rabbi Yose the Galilean says: "Fearful and fainthearted" – it is him who is afraid for his transgressions that he has committed." (*wĕyāsfū haššōṭrīm lĕdabbēr 'el hā'ām wĕ'āmrū mī hā'īš hayyārē wĕrak̲ hallēvāv yēlēk̲ wĕyāšōv lĕvēytō Rabbī 'Āqīvā 'ōmēr hayyārē wĕrak̲ hallēvāv kĕmišmā'ō še'ēynō yāk̲ōl l^{a'a}mōd bĕqišrēy hammilḥāmāh wĕlir'ōt ḥerev šĕlūfāh Rabbī Yōsē haggĕlīlī 'ōmēr hayyārē wĕrak̲ hallēvāv zehū hammityārē min hā^{a}vērōt šebĕyādō*) (Mišnāh ṣōṭāh 8:5)

Presumably literal understanding of the biblical text was often the starting-point of rabbinic interpretation and in most cases not even introduced by specific terminology because of its self-evidence. A considerable portion of Midrash literature can be seen as simple, linguistic commentary; how then does plain exegesis relate to the acceptance of derived meaning for biblical words and verses? Some scholars tend to accept a double standard in order to resolve the problem of the rabbinic attitude towards meaning: plain meaning and derived meaning are each other's opposites and represent two different ways of commenting, but plain meaning can also be taken as a starting-point for attaining derived meaning, playing an instrumental role in reaching a midrashic conclusion. In this way, the literal sense becomes part of the argumentation for the derived meaning of a biblical word or verse (Kadushin 1972: 98–121; Frankel 1991: 83–85). On the other hand, plain meaning remains to some extent an entity in itself. This is epitomized in the rabbinic saying that "Scriptural text cannot go beyond its literal purport" (*'ēyn miqrā yōẓē mīdēy pĕšūṭō*) (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 63a; Halivni 1991: 54–61), but at the same time biblical themes or persons are subject to the principle of multiple aggadic interpretation in accordance with another saying that "one Scriptural text may be used for many arguments" (*miqrā 'eḥād yōẓē lĕk̲ammāh ṭĕ'āmīm*) (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 34a).

The interpretive arguments employed by the sages in their aggadic homilies imply a connection between the lexical meaning of a given biblical word or phrase and the resultant concepts and ideas. Midrashic methodology, in this sense, requires a sequence of thought or a conceptual kinship between the biblical text and the aggadic interpretation involving components of semantic and syntactic nature. Expressions and passages from the Hebrew Bible are subject to modification as can be shown by a series of expositions in a homily on Gen. 21:9 ("But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, making sport (*mĕẓaḥēq*) with her son Isaac"):

"Rabbi Simeon said: "Rabbi Akiba used to say this to [Abraham's shame, and I said this to his praise." Rabbi Akiba explained (*dĕraš*): "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, etc. *mĕẓaḥēq* is nothing else but immorality, as you say, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to *make sport* of me (*lĕẓaḥeq*

> *bī*).'' [Gen. 39: 17] This teaches [us] that our mother Sarah saw Ishmael take possession of rooftops [commit sodomy], chase married women, and dishonour them.'' Rabbi Ishmael taught: ''This term *zĕḥōq* is nothing but idolatry, as it is said, ''And the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to make sport'' (*lĕẓaḥēq*) [Ex. 32: 6]. This teaches [us] that our mother Sarah saw Ishmael build altars, chase locusts, and sacrifice them.'' Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Rabbi Yose the Galilean, said: ''This term is nothing but a term for bloodshed, as you say, ''Let the young men arise and make sport (*wīś*^{a}*ḥ*^{a}*qū*) before us'' [II Sam. 2: 14]. Rabbi Azariah said in R. Levi's name: ''He [Ishmael] said [to Isaac]: ''Let us see our portions in the field.'' Ishmael would take arrows and shoot them in Isaac's direction, whilst pretending to make sport, as it is said, ''Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbour and says: I am only making sport (*mĕśaḥēq*).'' [Prov. 26: 18–19]. But I [Rabbi Simeon] say: ''This term *ẓĕḥōq* is nothing but a term for inheritance, for when our father Isaac was born all rejoiced. He [Ishmael] said to them: ''Fools are you! I am the firstborn and I receive a double portion.'' You may learn this from Sarah's reply to Abraham: ''For the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac'' [Gen. 21: 10]).
> (*'āmar Rabbī Šim'ōn Rabbī 'Āqīvā hāyāh 'ōmēr bō dāvār ligĕnāy w*^{a}*'*^{a}*nī 'ōmēr bō dāvār lĕševaḥ dĕrāš Rabbī 'Āqīvā wattēre Śārāh 'et ben Hāgār hammiẓrīt 'ēyn mĕẓaḥēq 'ellā gīllūy 'arāyōt kĕmāh dĕ'at 'amār bā 'ēlay hā'eved hā'ivrī 'ašer hēvētā lānū lĕẓaḥeq bī mĕlammēd šehāytāh śārāh 'immēnū rō'āh 'et Yišmā'ēl mĕḵabbēš gaggōt wĕẓād nĕšēy '*^{a}*nāšīm ūmĕ'anneh 'ōtām tĕnēy Rabbī Yišmā'ēl 'ēyn hallāšōn hazzeh ẓĕḥōq 'ellā '*^{a}*vōdāh zārāh šen*^{e}*'*^{e}*mār wayyēšev hā'ām l*^{e}*'*^{e}*ḵōl wĕšātō wayyāqūmū lĕẓaḥēq mĕlammēd šehāytāh śārāh 'immēnū rō'āh 'et Yišmā'ēl bōneh bāmōsiyyōt wĕẓād ḥ*^{a}*gāvīm ūmaqrīv '*^{a}*lēyhem Rabbī 'El'āzār bĕnō šel Rabbī Yōsēy haggĕlīlī 'ōmēr 'ēyn hallāšōn hazzeh 'ellā lĕšōn šĕfīḵūt dāmīm hēyḵ dĕ'at 'amār yāqūmū nā hannĕ'ārīm wīś*^{a}*ḥ*^{a}*qū lĕfānēynū Rabbī 'Azaryāh miššēm Rabbī Lēwī 'āmar nir'eh ḥelqēynū baśśādeh wĕhāyāh Yišmā'ēl nōṭēl ḥiẓẓīm ūmĕyyaddeh kĕlappēy Yiẓḥāq wĕ'āśāh 'aẓmō mĕẓaḥēq šenn*^{e}*'*^{e}*mār kĕmitlahlēah hayyōreh ziqqīm ḥiẓẓim wāmāwet kēn 'īš rimmāh 'et rē'ēhū wĕ'āmar h*^{a}*lō mĕśaḥēq 'ānī w*^{a}*'*^{a}*nī 'ōmēr 'ēyn hallāšōn hazzeh 'ellā lĕšōn yĕrūšāh šebbĕšā'āh šennōlād 'āvīnū Yiẓḥāq hāyū hakkol śĕmēḥīm 'āmar lāhem šōṭīm 'attem '*^{a}*nī bĕḵōr w*^{a}*'*^{a}*nī nōṭēl pīy šĕnayyim šemmittĕšūvāh še'āmrāh Śārāh 'immēnū kīy lō yīrāš ben hā'āmāh hazzōt 'im bĕnī 'im Yiẓḥāq 'at lāmēd*) (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 53,11; 567)

The arguments of R. Simeon (bar Yohay) at the beginning and concluding part of the homily on Gen. 21: 9 start from the literal meaning of the word *mĕẓāḥēq*, for the sake of a clear exegetical objective: the removal of Abraham's shame. As the father of Ishmael he could be blamed for the education he gave his son who allegedly engaged in idolatry, adultery, or bloodshed. His own opinion is that the term under discussion should be interpreted contextually in connection with the next verse leading to the notion of 'heritage'. The other expounders do not explicitly refer to the *pĕšāṭ* of the word itself. They start to look for analogical expressions including those with a different consonant *śīn* in various contexts, and transfer both context and meaning to the word discussed, stretching its semantic purport far beyond

its natural meaning. Most striking is the variation of new contexts and meanings which are brought into the framework of the same homily. Each authority defends his own imaginative interpretation and presents a combination of a biblical text together with a midrashic comment containing his particular idea or thought (Kadushin 1972: 126; Frankel 1991: 91–92). The new midrashic meaning often attains so much popularity that it supersedes the actual meaning and itself becomes the traditionally accepted and authoritative meaning. This observation brings Loewe to his view that plain literalism cannot be placed in a category of its own within rabbinic-aggadic exegesis (1964: 155–67). Kamin also examined the use of *pěšāṭ* and concluded that no specific method of interpretation can be deduced from the explanations in which this term appears. In her opinion terms deriving from the root *pšṭ* do not reflect a conscious conception of *pěšāṭ* as a clearly distinguished interpretive category (1978: 56–60).

Strictly speaking Loewe and Kamin are right with regard to the rabbinic use of *pěšāṭ* and *děrāš*: the distinction between literal and non-literal exegesis as designated by these two expressions was not realized in the Talmudic period, but in the Middle Ages to which we shall turn now.

5. Language and exegesis in the medieval Jewish tradition

5.1 Saadiah Gaon

Medieval Judaism is essentially a continuation of the rabbinic or talmudic tradition, but with the rise of Jewish studies on Hebrew lexicon and grammar the use and importance of linguistic knowledge for exegetical purposes increased (Drory 1988). One of the first and most prominent Jewish linguists was Saadiah ben Joseph al-Fayyumi, generally called Saadiah Gaon (882–942) who in his days was a leading authority in halakhic matters and religious thought. He was born in Egypt, but eventually attained the position of head (*gā'ōn*) at the rabbinic academy (*yěšīvāh*) of Sura in Babylonia. Saadiah devoted separate works to Hebrew philology and lexicography. He also made frequent linguistic observations in his biblical commentaries (Hirschfeld 1926: 11–7). His rationalist attitude towards traditional rabbinic interpretation was influenced by Greek and Arabic philosophy and by the unremitting debate with the contemporary Karaites. The Karaites exclusively relied on Scripture and categorically rejected the Talmud and its midrashic methods. They polemicized against the views of rabbinic Judaism in a rich literature of commentaries and historical writings. Saadiah was in the tradi-

tional rabbinic camp, expressing his ideas in numerous books and treatises. Unfortunately, we do not know about any specific writing by Saadiah on his hermeneutic methods, but scattered throughout his biblical commentaries we find isolated remarks on his understanding of biblical exegesis for which he employs the Arabic term *ta'wīl*. In Saadiah's opinion *ta'wīl* includes semantic analysis of biblical words in four ways: the meaning of a biblical verse can be established by a) paraphrase, b) logical insight, c) comparison with another biblical verse or d) tradition. A theoretical reflection of this idea can be found in Saadiah's major composition, a writing on philosophy entitled in Arabic *Kitāb al-Muẖtār fī l-'Amānāt wa-l-I'tiqādāt*, in Hebrew translation *Sēfer Hammivḥār Be'emūnōt wĕ-Dē'ōt*, "The Book of Critically Selected Beliefs and Convictions". In Chapter 5,8 he states that

> "those who interpret the verses of Sacred Writ in the way of *ta'wīl* fall into four categories. They may do so either to harmonize a verse in order to adapt [its meaning] a) to what is attested, or b) to what is sensible, or c) to what is written in another verse, or d) to what is found in tradition" (Rosenblatt 1976: 231–2; adapted).
> (*wa-'inna min al-muta'awwilīn man yata'awwalu l-fawāsīq 'alā 'arba'at ḍurūb man yata'awwalu fa-yuwāfiqu bayna fāsūq wa-bayna mā fī š-šāhid 'aw mā fī l-'aql 'aw mā fī n-naṣṣ al-'āẖar 'aw mā fī l-'āṯār*) (Qafiḥ 1970: 190; 1959: 233)

These words are specified in Chapter 7,1 of the *Kitāb al-Muẖtār fī l-'Amānāt*:

> "And so I declare, first of all, that it is a well-known fact that every statement found in the Bible is to be understood in its literal sense except for those that cannot be so construed for one of the following four reasons. It may, for example, either be rejected by the observation of the senses… or else the literal sense may be negated by reason… by an explicit text of a contradictory nature, in which case it would become necessary to interpret the first statement in a non-literal sense… finally any Biblical statement to whose meaning rabbinic tradition has attached a certain reservation is to be interpreted by us in keeping with this authentic tradition… Since these are the only four obvious reasons for a non-literal interpretation of the verses of Sacred Writ, there is no fifth" (Rosenblatt 1976: 265–7).
> (*wa-'aqūlu 'awwalan 'anna min al-ma'lūm 'an ḥaqā'iq al-'umūr 'anna kull qawl yūǧadu fī l-miqrā fa-huwa 'alā ẓāhirihi 'illā mā lā yaǧūzu 'an yu'ẖaḏa lahu bi-ẓ-ẓāhir li-'aḥad 'arba'at 'asbāb 'immā 'an yakūna l-ḥiss yudāfi'uhu… wa-'immā 'an yakūna l-'aql yarudduhu… wa-'immā 'an yakūna min naṣṣ faṣīḥ yumāni'uhu fa-yaǧibu 'an yuta'awwala minhu mā llaḏī laysa bi-faṣīḥ… wa-mā ǧā'at bihi l-'āṯār bi-šarīṭa 'alayhi fa-nufassiruhu tafsīran yuwāfiqu l-'āṯār aṣ-ṣādiqa… fa-lammā kānat al-'asbāb al-maẓhūra 'ilā ta'wīl al-pawāsīq hiya hāḏihi l-'arba'a wa-laysa ẖāmis*) (Qafiḥ 1970: 219–20)

Saadiah's theory of *ta'wīl* brings new aspects of interpretation into the realm of traditional Jewish exegesis under the influence of Islam. His own applica-

tion of *ta’wīl* reveals a new approach towards the meaning of biblical words as part of his advice on how to comment upon biblical text. He explains this in the introduction to his *Tafsīr*, “Commentary” on the Torah:

> “It is obligatory that a sensible person always take the Torah according to the plain meaning of its words, i.e., the one that is current and most frequently used among the people of its language, because everything written is confirmed by the fact that its meanings reach the heart of its listeners in the most perfect manner, apart from [the place] where the sensual and rational knowledge contradicts a current explanation of that saying, or that current explanation conflicts with another verse of unambiguous import, or conflicts with one tradition or another [of the prophets]. When he sees that if he leaves this saying to the current [explanation] of a word, the matter will cause him to believe in one of these four manners which I have told, then he will have to know that this saying is not according to the current [explanation], but it contains one or more words which are used in a figurative sense. When he finds out which manner of figurative sense is employed in order to bring [the word] back to its exact meaning, then this verse is made to accord with the sensual, the rational, the second verse, and tradition.” (*yanbaġī li-ḏī l-ʿaql ’an ya’ḫuḏa li-kitāb al-Torah ’abadan bi-ḥaqq aẓ-ẓāhir min ’alfāẓihi ’aʿnī al-mašhūr fī mā bayna ’ahl luġatihi wa-l-kaṯīr al-istiʿmāl ’iḏ kull kitāb innamā ’uṯbita li-taṣila maʿānīhā ’ilā qalb sāmiʿihā wuṣūlan tāmman ’illā ’an yakūna l-ʿilm al-ḥissī ’aw al-ʿaqlī [radda] mašhūr ḏālika l-qawl [wa-]yakūnu ḏālika l-mašhūr ’ayḍan yuḍāddu maktūban ’āḫaran (!) muḥkaman ’aw yuḍāddu ’aṯaran min al-’āṯār fa-’iḏā ra’ā ’annahu ’in taraka ḏālika l-qawl ʿalā l-mašhūr min lafẓ ’alabahu l-’amr ’ilā ’an yaʿtaqida wāḥida min hāḏihi l-’arbaʿa llatī ḥakaytuhā fa-yağibu ʿalayhi ’an yaʿlama ’anna laysa ḏālika l-qawl ʿalā mašhūrihi bal fīhā lafẓa ’aw ’alfāẓ qad ğā’at mağī’ al-mağāz wa-’innahā ’iḏā waqafa ʿalayhā ’ayy ḍarb min ḍurūb al-mağāz hiya ḥattā tarida ’ilā l-muḥkam ʿāda ḏālika l-maktūb ’ilā muwāfaqat al-maḥsūs wa-l-maʿqūl wa-l-maktūb al-’āḫar wa-l-ma’ṯūr*) (Qafiḥ 1970: 161–62; Zucker 1959: 230–31; 1984: 17–18)

This is the kernel of Saadiah’s lengthy and prudent argument for supporting the position of “direct meaning” alongside “investigated meaning”. Scripture is subject to the search for the “lexical” or “generally accepted” meaning of words and phrases for which Saadiah employs the expression *ẓāhir* or *ẓāhir al-lafẓ* in the Judeo-Arabic original. There is no doubt that Saadiah associated his approach of *ta’wīl* with the rabbinic method of *dĕrāš*, but following the concepts and methods of Islamic exegetes he adds philological principles (Goodman 1992: 46–49). Saadiah defines *ta’wīl* in the introduction to his translation of Isaiah as a method which forces us to pay attention to the laws of language which are accepted by the people (Derenbourg 1896; Raẓhabi 1984: 97–122). In his treatise *Tĕḥiyyat hammētīm*, “On the Resurrection of the Dead” he admits that the rules of *ta’wīl* and the usage of Arabic exegetical terms like *maʿnā*, “meaning”, and *mağāz*, “figurative

sense'', are adopted from Qur'ānic exegesis and accepted in Jewish circles (Bacher 1896: 98–112). In his famous *Tafsīr Kitāb al-Mabādi'* or *Pērūš Sēfer Yĕẓīrāh*, ''Commentary on the Book of Creation'', a rationalist exegesis of a mystical treatise dating from the early Talmudic period (3rd or 4th century), Saadiah introduces a few theoretical points with regard to meaning or *ma'nā*:

> ''The *ma'nā* cannot be apprehended without three elements: a) sound, b) word, and c) association. The sound is what is not meaningful, as when one utters ''Aa'' and other sounds. A word occurs when one says, ''man''. Here, too, no *ma'nā* can be discerned, and it remains unclear what he intended to say with his word ''man''. However, in [syntactical] association with other words *ma'nā* is accomplished, as, e.g., when one says ''a man found me'', or ''I saw a man''. Scripture states about these three elements: ''There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard'' (Ps.19: 4). ''Sound'' is what cannot be understood, ''utterances'' are isolated words, and ''sentences'' are the association of two or three [or more] words, as we have illustrated.''
> (*al-ma'nā lā yaḥṣulu 'illā min ṯalāṯat 'ašyā' min ṣawt wa-lafẓ wa-ta'līf fa-'ammā ṣ-ṣawt fa-huwa mā lā yu'qalu ka-qawl al-qā'il 'āā wa-sā'ir al-muṣawwatāt wa-'ammā l-lafẓ fa-huwa ka-qawlihi 'insān wa-hāḏā 'ayḍan lā yatabayyanu bihi ma'nā wa-lā mā ḏā 'arāda bi-qawlihi 'insān wa-'ammā t-ta'līf fa-'inna l-ma'nā yatimmu bihi wa-huwa 'an yaqūla 'insān laqiyanī 'aw ra'aytu 'insānan wa-fī hāḏihi ṯ-ṯalāṯa yaqūlu l-kitāb 'ēyn 'ōmer wĕ-'ēyn dĕvārīm bĕlī nišmā' qōlām fa-ṣ-ṣawt huwa mā lā yufhamu wa-l-kalām fa-hiya l-'alfāẓ wa-l-'ōmer huwa ta'līf lafẓatayn 'aw ṯalāṯ 'alā mā maṯṯalnā*) (1972: 53. Faur 1986: 72)

In this definition *ma'nā* refers to a level of meaning which is expressed through language. By implicative hierarchy *ma'nā* is attained at the third level only, which implies that *ma'nā* always requires more than one word: a ''complete'' meaning is realized only in the sentence involving sound, word, and a combination of words (Goodman 1990: 47–58). In Saadiah's writings we also find a different use of *ma'nā*. In his Responsae, for instance, *ma'nā* indicates the lexical (dictionary) senses of single words:

> ''We have already informed you that Hebrew has many words with different meanings, just like any other people, and it is impossible to comprise all its modes into one single mode. We have already described this to you with respect to the [Hebrew] word *'īš* (''man'') and we mention here too that Arabic has many words with different meanings, for instance the expression *'ayn* meaning ''the eye of a living being'', *'ayn* meaning ''a well'', *'ayn* meaning ''the solar disk''.
> (*qad 'a'lamnāka 'anna li-Yiśrā'ēl lafẓa wāḥida taǩtalifu ma'ānīhā fī kaṯīr min kalāmihim wa-kaḏālika li-kull 'umma fa-lā yaǧūzu ['an] naḥmila kull 'anwā' tafsīrihā 'alā naw' wāḥid wa-qad waṣafnā laka kaṯīr[an] min hāḏā fī kalimat 'īš wa-naḏkuru 'ayḍan hāhunā 'anna li-l-'Arab kalima wāḥida min kalāmihim lahā ma'ānin kaṯīra miṯl qawl al-qā'il 'ayn ya'nī 'ayn al-ḥayawān wa-'ayn ya'nī nabī' mā' wa-'ayn ya'nī qurṣ aš-šams.*) (Zucker 1959: 60)

Saadiah's equal command of the Hebrew and Arabic languages offered him the possibility to make relevant comparisons of a grammatical and lexical nature with consequences for his remarks on *maʿnā*. Almost every Bible commentary written in (Judeo-)Arabic contains Hebrew-Arabic lexical comparisons which became a topic in their own right during the 10th century in rabbinic as well as in Karaite circles (Eldar 1992: 355–82). The linguist Yehudah ibn Quraysh (10th century), a native of Fes, wrote a letter called the *Risāla*, "Treatise" addressed to the Jewish community of his home town, warning them not to neglect the customary reading of the Aramaic translation of the Torah (Targūm) in their synagogues, and at the same time stressing the importance of comparing the Hebrew language with its sister languages for explaining and solving difficult problems in Scripture (Becker 1984). Another native of Fes, David ben Abraham al-Fāsī (10th century), left for Jerusalem and joined the Karaite community. He wrote a dictionary known as *Kitāb Ǧāmiʿ al-ʾAlfāẓ*, "The Compilation of Words". Al-Fāsī takes biblical words and explains them with the aid of equivalents in Arabic, Aramaic as well as Rabbinic Hebrew and Persian. In several instances the author does not refer to Arabic directly, but employs the expression *ʿalā masmūʿihi* (literally from Hebrew *kĕmišmāʿō*: "according to what is heard in it"): a given Hebrew word has the same meaning as the similarly sounding word in Arabic (Maman 1985: 105). Al-Fāsī also classified words of the biblical lexicon according to their meaning such as synonyms, "words which differ in expression but agree in meaning" (*muḫtalifat al-manṭiq muttafiqat al-maʿnā* or *muḫtalifat al-manṭiq wa-muštarikat al-maʿnā*), and homonyms, "words which agree in expression but differ in explanation" (*muštarikat al-manṭiq wa-muḫtalifat al-tafsīr* (Skoss 1936–45: xci; Maman 1992: 106–164).

5.2 Translation technique

Saadiah's contribution to the understanding of meaning did not go so far as to develop a systematic, comparative method, but it was enriched by his own bilingualism (or rather trilingualism, including Aramaic) enabling him to present a range of possible meanings of a given Hebrew lexeme with the help of Arabic translated words or texts (Tene 1980: 355–77). The techniques of translation emerging from Arabic versions of the Hebrew Bible composed by Saadiah and his Karaite opponents, reveal a striking difference: whereas Saadiah prefers innovative methods of rendering the Biblical text into Arabic, Karaite authors exhibit another trend in translation tradition which may be

defined as imitative or literal, that is to say, they tend to translate the Hebrew text word for word into Arabic, choosing cognate roots on the basis of sound-similarity, and keeping close to the original Hebrew word order and sentence structure. In the monumental code of Karaite law by Jacob al-Qirqisani (10th century), *Kitāb al-'Anwār wa-l-Marāqib*, "The Book of Lights and Watch-towers", references are found to other independent essays on the art of translation and textual interpretation which have not yet been recovered. However, *Kitāb al-'Anwār* contains numerous observations on *ma'nā* by al-Qirqisani who advocates the value of literal meaning (*ẓāhir*), often in opposition to "hidden meaning" (*ḫafīy*) (Nemoy 1940: 355; Chiesa 1982: 124–37; Drory 1988: 104–128).

The literalism in the Arabic Bible translations of this and other Karaite exegetes like Yefet ben ʿEli (2nd half of the 10th century) and Yeshuʿah ben Yehudah (middle of the 11th century) was not a mindless echoing of the Hebrew Bible in a cognate language. Its real purpose was to express the grammatical and lexical structure of the Hebrew source language as accurately as possible in the Arabic target language without any denial of the status of Hebrew as "the eternal language" or "the holy tongue". The Karaite practice of Arabic Bible translation as it developed throughout the 10th and 11th centuries aimed at linguistic accuracy in the representation of the Hebrew text by means of transcription into Arabic characters and in the rendering of lexical or textual items.

Both Saadiah, together with his so-called Rabbanite successors, and the Karaites had to find a way to deal with an internal tension between the literal rendering of the Hebrew Bible into Arabic and their loyalty to the essence of the contents and specific exegetical results (Mann 1926: 437–45). The Karaites resolved the matter of *pĕṣāṭ* and *dĕrāš* by generally rejecting derived meaning of the biblical text. The main emphasis was put on the explanation of meaning according to the grammatical and semantic requirements of the biblical text itself, and not according to extra-textual considerations. Yeshuʿah ben Yehudah uses alternative renderings for one Hebrew lexeme, which were inserted into his continuous translation of the biblical text. In this manner he wished to give expression to the semantic range of the Hebrew original by providing its possible meanings in a set of Arabic equivalents. To his mind there is no such thing as one exclusive interpretation of Scripture via translation. He explicitly states in the introduction to his commentary on Genesis that *ma'nā* is contextual rather than word-specific (Polliack 1993–94: 209–226; Zwiep 1995: 63–73).

5.3 The way towards *pĕšāṭ*

The example of Karaite exegesis was followed by some Rabbanite commentators, most outspokenly by a Gaon who flourished in the 2nd half of the 10th century, Rabbi Samuel ben Chofni, although he claims to follow the line of Saadiah (Greenbaum 1979: 478; Zucker 1984: 36–37). Others did not adhere to the principle of exclusivity either, but accepted the coexistence of *pĕšāṭ* and *dĕrāš*. The pioneer of this approach is the great rabbinic commentator Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac known by his acronym as Rashi (1040–1105). Rashi expresses his intentions with regard to literal and derived meaning in a commentary on Gen. 3: 8: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden":

> "There are many aggadic Midrashim and our Rabbis have already collected them in Genesis Rabbah and other Midrashic works, but I have only come for the sake of the plain sense of the verse (*pĕšūṭō šel miqrā*), and such aggadic statements that explain the words of the text in a manner that fits in with them. "They heard": what did they hear? They heard the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, who was walking in the garden."
> (*yēš midrĕšēy 'aggādāh rabbīm ūk̲ĕvār siddĕrūm rabbōtēynū ʿal mĕk̲ōnām bĕB"R ūvišĕ'ār midrāšōt w*[a]'[a]*nī lō bātī 'ellā lifšūṭō šel miqrā ūlĕ'aggādāh hammĕyašševet divrēy hammiqrā dāvār dāvūr ʿal 'ofnāw wayyišmĕʿū mah šāmʿū šāmʿū 'et qōl HQB"H šehāyāh mithallēk̲ baggān*) (1976: 13–4)

Rashi felt the need to introduce the idea of *pĕšāṭ* in contrast with the traditional midrashic mode of interpretation. Rashi's treatment of plain exegesis generally demonstrates his preference for establishing literal meaning (by the exclusive use of the term *pĕšūṭō*); on the other hand, he did not want or was not able to leave the derived meaning which was sanctified by the tradition of midrashic thinking (Melammed 1978: 359–66; Kamin 1986: 111–15; Gelles 1981: 112–16; Grossman 1995: 193–201). Rashi clearly kept his concern for both levels of meaning and in the majority of instances the plain sense appears in juxtaposition with the derived sense.

It was Rashi's grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, referred to by his acronym Rashbam, who turned the concept of actual, natural meaning into a methodological device. In many instances Rashbam offers explanations of words and phrases that contradict halakhic or midrashic exegesis (Melammed 1978: 458; Gelles 1981: 123–27). Rashbam applies the rule of *pĕšāṭ* in a much stricter way than his grandfather because of his unwillingness to concede that *dĕrāš* is a possible meaning of the biblical text, but both exegetes could not escape the new insights gained from Hebrew grammatical studies (Bromberg 1969: 9; Berger 1982). Rashbam alludes to this in one of his

expressions: "This is the essence of its *pěšāṭ* for a grammarian of the Holy Language" (on Gen. 24: 23: *zehū ʿīqār pěšūṭō limědaqdeq lěšōn haqqōdeš*). Similarly, Rashi states in a commentary on Is. 26: 11, where he wishes to draw a distinction between aggadic Midrashim and simple exegesis, that "the [expressions] are not adequately explained according to the grammar of language" (*wěʾēynām měyūššāvīm ʿal diqdūq hallāšōn*) (Melammed 1978: 458,360). Rashbam's younger brother Rabbenu Tam (c. 1100–1171) also took an interest in the study of language. His grammatical composition, known as *Hak̲rāʿōt*, "Decisions", consists for the most part of biblical elucidations according to the principle of *pěšāṭ* (Filipowski 1968; Eldar 1993: 31).

5.4 Meaning in Hebrew grammar and lexicography

Rashi, his grandsons, as well as other advocates of the *pěšāṭ* show a strong sense of the grammatical and lexicographic implications of their activity in their writings (van Bekkum 1993: 427–35). Many quotations are found of Menaḥem ibn Sārūq (c. 910-c. 980) who wrote a dictionary of biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, which was written originally in Hebrew and was the first writing of its kind. This dictionary entitled *Maḥberet*, "Composition" is organized according to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The entries are alphabetically arranged according to combinations of letters establishing Hebrew roots, each of them determined by means of morphological criteria. However, Menaḥem was not yet familiar with the principle of triliterality and many two-letter root entries with so-called weak consonants should have come under three-letter entries. This could sometimes lead to wrong conclusions concerning the subdivision of semantic groups within a root entry (Sáenz-Badillos 1986: 25–39). Menaḥem was therefore often justly attacked by his rival Dunash ibn Labraṭ from Fez (c. 920-c. 990) in his *Sēfer Těšūvōt*, "Book of Refutations" (Sáenz-Badillos 1980). However, Ibn Labraṭ's observations are also purely empirical and do not amount to a consistent theory of the Hebrew triliteral root system. His lexical criticism aims at more accuracy in describing semantic values of words and expressions, and obscurities are often clarified with the aid of Arabic and Aramaic words. The debate between Menaḥem and Dunash was carried on by their students (Robles 1986).

The application of the principle of triliterality which had already been used in Arabic language theory since the 8th century, was introduced into Hebrew grammar studies by Yehudah ben David Ḥayyūǧ (c. 945-c. 1000). Ḥayyūǧ

argued for the existence of weak letters and the triliteral root in the Hebrew verb system. His main objective was to direct the reader to the understanding of those verbal forms whose triliteral roots are not self-evident. He listed the weak verbs and explained the changes of the weak letters. Ḥayyūǧ recognized the interdependence of various linguistic areas like phonology, morphology and semantics that underlay his approach. Use of semantic arguments can only occasionally be discerned when he connects two verbs to each other because of a common root meaning (Kaplan 1992: 391–403).

Inspired by the writings of Ḥayyūǧ, Yonah (’Abū l-Walīd Marwān) ibn Ǧanāḥ (middle 11th century) produced a systematic approach to Classical Hebrew in his unsurpassed *Kitāb at-Tanqīḥ*, "Book of Minute Research". This work consists of two separate volumes: a profound and comprehensive grammar, the *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ*, "Book of Brilliancies" (Derenbourg 1886), and a dictionary called the *Kitāb al-’Uṣūl*, "Book of Roots" (Neubauer 1968). Both parts were written in Arabic and arranged in accordance with the standards of Arabic philological and lexicographic works. Yehudah ibn Tibbon translated both compositions into Hebrew in 1171, calling them *Sēfer Harriqmāh*, "Book of Coloured Flowerbeds" (Wilenski 1964) and *Sēfer Haššŏrāšīm*, "Book of Roots" (Bacher 1969) respectively. In the introduction to *Sēfer Harriqmāh*, Ibn Ǧanāḥ sets the limits for adducing comparative evidence from other languages. Some of the ancient rabbis explained the meaning of Hebrew words with the help of Greek, Persian, Arabic, African and other languages. This evidence is too far-fetched in the eyes of Ibn Ǧanāḥ. He states that only Aramaic and Arabic are fit for comparison because of their similarity to Hebrew in the verbal system of weak verb forms (Wilensky 1964: 18). At the same time Ibn Ǧanāḥ criticizes contemporary commentators who rely upon the derived meanings of words and expressions related to the halakhic or legislative rulings of Jewish tradition. He points out that the rational exegesis of the great "Peshatists" (*hapĕšāṭīyyim/al-pašāṭiyyah*) Saadiah Gaon and R. Samuel ben Chofni on halakhic matters deserves more study: "and if one rejects them in this respect, one rejects even more the evidence they adduce from the Arabic language" (*wĕ’im hēm magdīlīm kĕmō zeh ʿᵃlēyhem kol šekkēn šeyyagdīlū mah šemmēvī’īm ’ōtō lĕʿēd min hallāšōn hāʿᵃrāvī/fa-hum yunkirūna miṯla hāḏā ʿalayhim faḍlan ’an yunkirū mā yastašhidū bihi min al-lafẓ al-ʿarabī*) (1886: 8). In spite of the numerous semantic clarifications of biblical words and verses, mostly with reference to cognates in Arabic, Ibn Ǧanāḥ does not enter into theoretical observations on meaning in the Hebrew language.

Although Hebrew grammarians of the 11th and 12th centuries were aware of the importance of meaning, they did not occupy themselves with a discussion of its role. One exception is Yehudah b. Samuel ibn Balʿam (late 11th century) who wrote a treatise on the use of Hebrew homonyms and particles entitled *Kitāb at-Tağnīs wa-Ḥurūf al-Maʿānī* (also considered as two separate works, Maman 1978: 245–6). In the *Kitāb at-Tağnīs*, an alphabetical list of biblical Hebrew homonyms is presented for the sake of poetry and homily (*fī šiʿr ʾaw fī ḫuṭba*) together with relevant semantic information (Poznanski 1916: 449–76; Abramson 1963; Allony 1964).

Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1165) sought to transfer the achievements of Hebrew linguistics based upon Arabic models to Western Europe. In his Hebrew-written guide-book *Sēfer Mōznēy Lĕšōn Haqqōdeš* or *Sēfer Mōznayim*, "Balance of the Holy Language" or "Book of Balance", he offers valuable information about persons and books until the mid-12th century and describes standard Hebrew terminology in language science (Heidenheim 1791; Bacher 1882: 71–79; Prijs 1950). In the introduction to his commentary on Genesis, Abraham ibn Ezra summarizes the state of affairs in Jewish exegesis and describes five methods of interpretation (Jacobs 1973: 8–18):

> "The first way is long and wide, too exalted for the people of our generation. If truth is like a [center] point within the circle, then this way is like a wide line going round only to return to the place where it began. Great men followed this way: the sages of the academies in the kingdom of the Ishmaelites… Rav Saadiah, Gaon of the Exile… also R. Samuel ben Chofni… The second way: misguided people chose it, though they are Israelites who thought that they stood on the [center] point itself. They did not know its place; it is the way of the Sadducees [the Karaites who, like the Sadducees, denied the authority of the oral traditions]… The third way is a way of darkness and obscurity, outside the circle. These are the ones who fabricate secrets to all words. Their belief is that the teachings and precepts are riddles… The fourth way is near to the [center] point; a group [of commentators] follow it. This is the way [pursued by] the sages in the countries of Greeks and Edomites [Romans, Christians], for they do not look at balance; they just rely on *dĕrāš*… The fifth way is the one upon which I shall base my commentary; it is right in my eyes… I shall investigate the grammatical form of each word with all the power at my command; then I shall explain it according to the best of my ability. You must look for the explanation of each word in the place where that word first occurs… the way of *pĕšāṭ* does not turn aside for *dĕrāš*."
> (*hadderek̠ hā’aḥat ’[a]rukkāh urĕḥāvāh uminnafšōt ’anšēy dōrēnū niśgāvāh wĕ’im hā’[e]met kinĕquddāh bĕtōk̠ hāʿ[a]gullāh zot hadderek̠ kĕqaw hārōḥav hassōvēv battĕḥillāh ūvāh dārk̠ū gĕdōlīm wĕhēmāh ḥak̠mēy hayĕšīvōt bĕmalk̠ūt yišmĕʿēlīm… Rav Sĕʿadyāh Gĕ’ōn haggōlāh… gam R. Šĕmū’ēl ben ḥŏfnī… hadderek̠ haššĕniyyāh bĕḥārūhā pĕtaltullīm wĕ’im hēm yiśrā’ēlīm ’[a]šer ḥāšvū kīy ʿāmdū ʿal hannĕquddāh vĕʿaẓmāh wĕhēm lo yādʿū*

'et mĕqōmāh wĕzot derek̲ hazzĕdōqīm… hadderek̲ haššĕlīšīt derek̲ ḥošek̲ wa'afēlāh wĕhī mēḥūẓ lĕqaw hā'agullāh wĕhēm habbōd'īm millibbām lĕk̲ol haddĕvārīm sōdōt we'emūnātām kīy hattōrōt wĕhammišpāṭīm ḥīdōt… hadderek̲ hārĕvī'īt qĕrōvāh 'el hannĕquddāh wĕrādfū 'aḥareyhā 'aguddāh zot derek̲ haḥak̲āmīm bĕ'arẓōt yĕwānīm wa'adōmīm šello yabbīṭū 'el mišqal mōznayim raq yismĕk̲ū 'al derek̲ dĕrāš… hadderek̲ haḥamīšīt mōsad pērūšī 'āleyhā 'āšīt wĕhī hayĕšārāh bĕ'ēynay… wa'aḥappēś hēyṭēv diqdūq kol millāh bĕk̲ol mĕ'ōdī wĕ'aḥar kēn 'afaršennāh kĕfīy taśśīg yādī wĕk̲ol millāh šettĕvaqšennāh bĕfērūš hammillāh hārīšōnāh timẓā'ennāh… ūva'avūr haddĕrūš derek̲ happĕšāṭ 'ēynāh sārāh) (Levin 1985: 141–44)

With the aid of the metaphor of the center point within the circle symbolizing truth Ibn Ezra criticizes the interpretive way of the Geonim including Saadiah and R. Samuel. These sages adduce their arguments in a long concentric circle without ever approaching the truth. Ibn Ezra alludes here to the use of philosophical and scientific arguments in biblical exegesis. The interpretive method of the Karaites is even more despicable because of their denial of the consensus reached through rabbinic tradition. Thus the Bible can be explained in any given way in order to undermine halakhic norms. The third accusation is the strongest: it regards those who allegorize the entire Bible and thereby abolish teachings and laws. The fourth interpretive method is *dĕrāš*, close to truth but not truth itself. Ibn Ezra specifically attacks Christian sages who exploit allegories and riddles for the sake of their own faith. Finally, the fifth way represents Ibn Ezra's personal option: grammatical and rational insights support the search for unambiguous understanding of Scripture which is realized in *pĕšāṭ*. This type of *pĕšāṭ* cannot be learned from earlier commentators, not even from Rashi. Ibn Ezra states in his grammar book *Śāfāh Bĕrūrāh*, "Pure Language":

"I shall speak about notions which are compared to souls whereas words resemble bodies… *dĕrāš* is only an addition to notion and subsequent generations have set all *dĕrāš* as a basic principle like Rabbi Solomon who wrote a commentary on Scripture by *dĕrāš*. He thinks it is by *pĕšāṭ*, but in his books only one in a thousand is *pĕšāṭ*." (*'adabbēr baṭṭĕ'āmīm šehēm nimšālīm linĕfāšōt wĕhammillōt dōmōt ligĕwiyyōt… wĕhaddĕrāš hū tōsefet ṭa'am wĕhaddōrōt habbā'īm śāmū kol dĕrāš 'īqār wĕšōreš kĕrāv šĕlōmōh z'l šeppērēš hattĕnāk̲ 'al derek̲ dĕrāš wĕhū ḥōšēv kīy hū 'al derek̲ pĕšāṭ wĕ'ēyn bisĕfārāw pĕšāṭ raq 'eḥād minnī 'elef*) (Lippmann 1967: 4–5; Wilensky 1975: 64).

Here Abraham Ibn Ezra touches upon the essence of meaning ("soul") as against the form of a word ("body"). At the same time he illustrates that soul and body in their unitedness point to the intricate combination of *ṭa'am* and *millāh*, i.e., according to his terminology, notion and word. Ibn Ezra wants to explicate Scripture in terms of a literal understanding, a *pĕšāṭ* that does not offend against reason. The rabbinic midrashic explanation that goes

beyond *pěšāṭ* does not establish the contents of meaning of Scripture. Even what is called an explanation according to the *pěšāṭ* in Rashi's writings, does not provide the proper interpretation. This is how Ibn Ezra expresses his awareness of one of the main problems in medieval Jewish thinking: when rabbinic midrash stood at a great distance from the real significance of the biblical text, how then could one come to terms with traditional exegesis (Attias 1991: 51–56)? It is mainly through the views of Moses Maimonides that the discussion of meaning took a revolutionary course within the context of this question.

6. The Logical and Philosophical Tradition of medieval Judaism

6.1 Moses Maimonides

Like Ibn Ezra, the translator family Ibn Tibbon contributed to the dissemination of Hebrew sciences from Spain. As a rule, most Jews in a Christian environment were not acquainted with the Arabic language. Several generations of this particular family of the Tibbonids were involved in translating scientific and philosophical works from Arabic into Hebrew. One of them, Samuel ibn Tibbon, flourished in the Provence and Italy during the 13th century. He translated one of the most important books in Jewish thought, *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn*, into Hebrew: *Mōreh Hanněvūḵīm*, the "Guide of the Perplexed" by Moses ben Maimon or Maimonides (1135/8–1204; Schiffman 1994: 103–42).

It is Maimonidean philosophy that provides us with insights relevant to the study of meaning and both his "Treatise on the Art of Logic" and the "Guide" can also be perceived in the light of the Judeo-Arabic linguistic tradition of Spain. These books are among other things concerned with religious language and symbolism as is made clear by Maimonides in Chapter 13 of his first work, the *Maqāla fī Ṣināʿat al-Manṭiq*, "the Treatise on the Art of Logic":

> "In all languages words are necessarily divided into three classes: distinct (*mutabāyin*), synonyms (*murādif*), and homonyms (*muštarik*). When one meaning has many expressions they are synonyms; when it has one expression with several meanings, it is a homonym; and when different words have different meanings each word having its own meaning, they are distinct… The homonymous terms are divided into six classes: absolute homonyms, corresponding terms, amphibolous terms, terms used in general and in particular, figurative terms, and metaphorical terms… (1938: 59; adapted)
> (*wa-l-'asmā' fī kull luġa yanqasimu qisman ḍarūriyyan 'ilā ṯalat 'aǧnās 'immā mutabāyina wa-'immā murādifa 'aw muštarika wa-ḏālika 'anna l-maʿnā al-wāḥid 'iḏā*

kānat lahu 'asmā' kaṯīra fa-hiya mutarādifa wa-'iḏā kāna lahu 'ism wāḥid li-maʿānin kaṯīra fa-ḏālika huwa l-ism al-muštarik wa-'iḏā kānat 'asmā' mutaġāyira li-maʿānin mutaġāyira kull maʿnan lahu 'ism yaḫuṣṣuhu fa-tilka hiya l-'asmā al-mutabāyina… al-'asmā' al-muštarika yanqasimu sittat 'aqsām minhā al-muštarika al-muḫ[t]aṣṣat al-ištirāk wa-minhā al-mutawāṭi'a wa-minhā al-mušakkika wa-minhā mā yuqālu bi-ʿumūm wa-ḫuṣūṣ wa-minhā al-mustaʿāra wa-minhā al-manqūla) (1938: 35)

Maimonides provides examples of these six classes of homonymous terms and ultimately arrives at the concept of logos (Arabic: *manṭiq*; Hebrew: *dibbūr*) in Chapter 14 applying his linguistic findings to the threefold Aristotelian definition of its notions: a) rational power, the power peculiar to man by which he intellectually apprehends the intelligibles, masters the arts and distinguishes between the base and the noble; b) idea or internal reason, the intelligible itself which man has intellectually apprehended; c) interpretation or external reason, the expression in language of the notions impressed upon the soul (1938: 61; Weiss-Butterworth 1975: 158; Hyman 1991: 175–91; Zwiep 1995: 21–22). The linguistic discussion and a division of terminology constitute the opening of the Introduction to the "Guide":

"The first purpose of this Treatise is to explain certain terms (in Arabic original: *maʿānī 'asmā'*) occurring in the books of prophecy. Some of these terms are homonymous (Ar: *'asmā' muštarika*); the ignorant attribute to them only one or some of the meanings in which the term in question is used. Others are figurative terms (Ar: *mustaʿāra*); [the ignorant] attribute to them only the original meaning from which the other meaning is derived. Others are amphibolous terms (Ar: *mušakkik*), so that at times they are believed to be univocal and at other times equivocal" (1963: 5).
(*hamm^{a}'^{a}mār hazzeh ʿinyānō hārīšōn lĕvā'ēr šēmōt bā'ū vĕsifrēy hannĕvū'āh. mēhaššēmōt hāhēm šēmōt mištatfīm wĕyiqḥūm happĕtāyīm kĕfīy qĕẓāt hāʿinyānīm '^{a}šer yōmar ʿ^{a}lēyhem haššēm hahū hammištatēf. ūmēhem mūš'^{a}līm wĕyiqḥūm gam kēn kĕfīy hāʿinyān hārīšōn '^{a}šer hūš'^{a}lū mimmennū ūmēhem mĕsūppāqīm paʿam yēḥāšēv bāhem šehēm yē'āmrū bĕhaskāmāh ūfaʿam yēḥāšēv bāhem šehēm mištatfīm*) (1904: 3)

Maimonides distinguishes here between different kinds of lexical meaning (*maʿānī/ʿinyānīm*) which are easily confused by the common people with consequences for the understanding of expressions in Bible and Talmud. He then continues:

"This Treatise also has a second purpose: namely, the explanation of very obscure "parables" (Ar: *'amṯāl*) occurring in the books of the prophets, but not explicitly identified as being parable(s). However, an ignorant or heedless individual might think that they possess only an external sense (Ar: *ʿalā ẓāhirihā*), but no internal one (Ar: *bāṭin*). When one who truly possesses knowledge considers [these parables] and interprets them according to their external meaning (Ar: *ʿalā ẓāhirihā*) he too is overtaken by great perplexity. But if we explain these parable(s) to him or if we draw his attention to their

being parables, he will take the right road and be delivered from this perplexity. That is why I have called this Treatise the Guide of the Perplexed" (6).
(*ūvikĕlal hammaʾamār hazzeh kawwānāh šĕnīyyāh wĕhū bīʾūr mĕšālīm sĕtūmīm mĕʾōd šebāʾū bĕsifrēy hannĕvīʾīm wĕlō pūrāš šehēm māšāl ʾavāl yērāʾeh lassēkel wĕlannivhāl šehēm kifšūṭēyhem wĕʾēyn tāwek bāhem ūkĕšeyyitbōnēn bāhem hayyōdēaʿ bāhem beʾemet wĕyiqḥēm ʿal pĕšūṭēyhem titḥādēš lō gam kēn mĕvūkāh gĕdōlāh ūkĕšenĕvāʾēr lō hammāšāl hahū ʾō nĕʿōrēr ʿal heyōtō māšāl yĕmallēṭ wiyĕnaẓẓēl min hammĕvūkāh hahī wĕlazzeh niqrā hammaʾamār hazzeh Mōreh Hannĕvūkīm*) (4)

The books of the prophets, according to Maimonides, contain obscure parables (*ʾamṯāl/mĕšālīm*) that are not adequately taught as part of figurative interpretation. Whoever takes them in their external, that is, literal sense, *ʿalā ẓāhirihā/ʿal pĕšūṭēyhem*, will remain in perplexity. Maimonides accepts the task of resolving this perplexity by explaining the characteristics of figurative meaning upon which he builds his philosophic and scientific themes and concepts (Kadushin 1973: 102–6). However, the question remains what Maimonides thinks of the literal sense of Hebrew Scripture. Does Maimonides agree with the rabbinic view that *pĕšāṭ* and *dĕrāš* are two separate things? Is his idea of figurative meaning really the same as *dĕrāš*? The search for answers leads to a complex of factors which play a part in Maimonidean thinking. Figurative meaning seems to be of paramount importance according to the following statement:

"Know that the key to the understanding of all that the prophets, peace be on them, have said, and to the knowledge of its truth, is an understanding of the parables, of their meaning, and of the explanation of the words occurring in them" (Introduction; 10–11).
(*iʿlam ʾanna miftāḥ fahm ǧamīʿ mā qālathu ʾl-ʾanbiyāʾ ʿalayhim as-salām wa-maʿrifat ḥaqīqatihi huwa fahm al-ʾamṯāl wa-maʿānīhā wa-taʾwīl ʾalfāẓihā* (1972: 10) */daʿ kīy maftēaḥ havānat kol mah šeʾāmrūhū hannĕvīʾīm z"l wīyĕdīʿat ʾamittātō hū havānat hammĕšālīm wĕʿinyānēyhem ūfērūš millōtēyhem*) (7)

However, this remark is followed by a description of two types of meaning in Scripture founded upon the rabbinic passage in Canticles Rabbah 1,1 that "a man who loses a *selaʿ* (a coin worth ninety-six *issar*) or a pearl in his house can find the pearl by lighting a taper worth an *issar*" (*zeh šemmĕʾabbēd selāʿ ʾō margālīt bĕtōk bēytō ʿad šehū madlīq pĕtīlāh bikĕʾissār mōẓē ʾet hammargālīt*):

"This parable in itself is worth nothing, but by means of it you can understand the words of the Torah. This is what [the Sages also] say. Now consider their explanation that the internal meanings (Ar: *bawāṭin*) of the words of the Torah are pearls whereas the external meaning (Ar: *ẓāhir*) of each parable is worth nothing. The concealed meaning (Ar: *ḫafīy al-maʿnā l-mamṯūl*) and (the parable's) external meaning (Ar: *fī ẓāhir al-maʿnā*) are likened to a man who let drop a pearl in his house, which was dark and full

of furniture. Now this pearl is there, but he does not see it and does not know where it is. It is as though it were no longer in his possession, as it is impossible for him to derive any benefit from it until, as has been mentioned, he lights a lamp – an act to which an understanding of the meaning of the parable (Ar: *maʿnā l-maṯal*) corresponds" (Introduction; 11).
(*kāḵ hammāšāl hazzeh 'ēynō ḵĕlūm wĕʿal yĕdēy hammāšāl 'attāh rō'eh 'et divrēy hattōrāh zeh hū dĕvārām gam kēn wĕhitbōnēn bē'ūrām z"l kīy tōḵōt divrēy Tōrāh hēm hammargāliōt ūfĕšūṭō šel kol māšāl 'ēynō ḵĕlūm ūdĕmūtām hastēr hāʿinyān hannimšāl bifĕšūṭō šel māšāl kĕmīy šenāflāh lō margālīt bĕvēytō wĕhū bĕvayit 'āfēl bālūm wĕyēš bō ḵēlīm rabbīm wĕhinnēh hammargālīt bĕvayit 'āfēl 'ellā šehū lō yir'ennāh wĕlō yēdaʿ bāh ūḵĕ'illū yāẓ'āh mērĕšūtō kīy nimnĕʿāh mimmenū tōʿaltāh ʿad šeyadlīq hannēr kĕmō šezāḵar 'ᵃšer dōmeh lō hᵃvānat ʿinyān hammāšāl*) (7)

And he immediately continues on the basis of Prov. 25: 11: "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word fitly spoken" (*tappūḥēy zāhāv bĕmaś-kiyyōt kāsef dāvār dāvur ʿal 'ofnāw*):

"[Solomon] said that an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes is compared to a word fitly spoken. See how marvelously this word is described as a well-constructed parable (Ar: *al-maṯal al-muḥkam*)! For he says that a saying that has two faces – he means an external (Ar: *ẓāhir*) and an internal one (Ar: *bāṭin*) – the external meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning…" (Introduction; 12)
(*wĕ'āmar kīy māšāl tappūaḥ zāhāv bĕśivḵat kesef daqqat hannĕqāvīm mĕ'ōd hū haddā-vār haddāvūr ʿal 'ofnāw ūrĕ'ēh mah niflā zeh haddāvār bĕtō'ar hammāšāl hammĕ-tūqqān wĕzeh šehū 'ōmēr šehaddāvār šehū baʿal šĕnēy pānīm rōẓeh lōmar šeyyēš lō nigleh wĕnistār ẓārīḵ šeyyihyeh niglēhū ṭōv kĕḵesef wĕẓārīḵ šeyyihyeh tōḵō ṭōv minniglēhū ʿad šeyyihyeh tōḵō bĕʿereḵ 'el gĕlūyō kĕzāhāv 'ēẓel hakkesef wĕẓārīk šeyyihyeh bigĕlūyō mah šeyyōreh hammitbōnēn ʿal mah šebbĕtōḵō*) (8)

Maimonides distinguishes two levels of meaning, in accordance with the Arabic antonyms *ẓāhir*, the "outer", obvious sense, and *bāṭin*, the "inner", concealed sense, translated in Hebrew as *nigleh* and *nistār*, and, remarkably enough, as *pāšūṭ* and *tāweḵ*. The *ẓāhir* or *pāšūṭ* can be considered as the lexical meaning of a word and as a part of the *maʿnā* of a biblical verse or sentence. This *maʿnā* has to be generated and decoded by exegetical methods, but it is not directly recognizable by all the members of the speaking community. Divine beings of a higher order communicate *maʿnā* without language, but human beings transmit it linguistically (Faur 1986: 72):

"And similarly we do not know nor can we represent to ourselves how a *maʿnā* can be transmitted from the soul of one individual to the soul of another individual except

through the instrumentality of speech, which is a sound produced by the lips, the tongue, and the other organs of speech." (I,46; 98)
(*wa-kaḏālika lā naʿlamu wa-lā nataṣawwaru intiqāl al-maʿnā min nafs šaḫṣ minnā li-nafs šaḫṣ ʾāḫar ʾillā bi-kalām wa-huwa ṣ-ṣawt allaḏī taqṭaʿuhu š-šafa wa-l-lisān wa-sāʾir ʾālāt al-kalām* (100) */wĕḵēn lō nēdaʿ wĕlō nĕẓayyēr heʿtēq haʿinyān minnefeš ʾīš mimmennū lĕnefeš ʾīš ʾāḥēr ʾellā bĕdibbūr wĕhū haqqōl ʾašer yaḫtĕḵūhū haśśāfāh wĕhallāšōn ūšĕʾār kĕlēy haddibbūr*) (64)

As can be concluded from this statement Maimonides treated the faculty of speech as a system of communication which conveys *maʿnā*: "For speaking with the tongue is one of the properties of a human being and a benefit that is granted to him and by which he is distinguished" (III,8; 435) (*ʾiḏ hāḏā n-nuṭq bi-l-lisān huwa min ḫawāṣṣ al-ʾinsān wa-niʿamihi ʾunʿima bihā ʿalayhi wa-muyyiza bihā* (272) / *šezzeh haddibbūr bĕlāšōn hū missĕgūlat bĕnēy ʾādām wĕṭōvāh gĕmālāh Haššēm lĕʾādām lĕhavdīlō [mišĕʾār b*[a]*ʾalēy ḥay-yim]*). Speech is in his opinion a divine gift, but language is a human artefact, conventional and not a product of nature: "Among the things you ought to know and have your attention drawn to is the dictum: And the man gave names, and so on (Gen. 2: 20). It informs us that languages are conventional (Ar: *al-luġāt iṣṭilāḥiyya*) and not natural (Ar: *ṭabīʿiyya*), as has sometimes been thought" (II,30; 357–58) (*ūmimmah šezzārīḵ šettedʿēhū wĕtitʿōrēr ʿālāw ʾŏmrō wayyiqrā hāʾādām šēmōt lĕmēdēnū šehallĕšōnōt heskēmiyyōt lō ṭivʿiyyōt kĕmō šekkĕvār ḥāšvū zeh*) (63). The term for "conventional" which refers to the dependence of languages on human linguistic agreement, is in the Hebrew translation an adjective derived from the word *haskāmāh*, "consensus" (Ar. *iṣṭilāḥ*) (Sarfatti 1978: 57–58). This theory of language can be understood in the light of Maimonides' distinction between "meaning" and "name", between "message" and "word" (*maʿnā/ism*; *ʿinyān/ šēm*), for instance, with regard to divine and human attributions:

"The meanings of the qualificative attributes ascribed to Him and the meaning of the attributes known to us have nothing in common in any respect or in any mode; these attributes have in common only the name and nothing else" (I,56; 131; adapted).
(*hāḏihi l-ʾawṣāf al-mansūba lahu laysa bayna maʿnāhā wa-maʿnā hāḏihi l-maʿlūma ʿindanā širka bi-waǧh wa-lā ʿalā ḥāl wa-ʾinnamā š-širka fī l-ism lā ġayr* (137) / *hattĕʾārīm hammĕyūḥāsīm lō ʾēyn bēyn ʿinyānēyhem wĕʿinyān ʾēllū hannōdāʿīm ʾezlēnū šātūf bĕšūm pānīm wĕlō bĕšūm ʿinyān wĕʾŏmnām haššātūf baššēm wĕlō bĕdāvār ʾāḥēr*) (84)

This illustrates Maimonides' view on homonymy: "name" is considered as a linguistic category and it may be defined in linguistic terms. "Meaning", however, transcends the linguistic expression: there is no absolute correspon-

dence between *ism* and *maʿnā*, because one and the same *ism* may stand for more than one *maʿnā*, as in the example just cited, or one *maʿnā* may require more than one *ism*. Sometimes *ism* can be completely devoid of *maʿnā* or there are *maʿānī* (plur.) that cannot be conveyed by any *ism*. These observations explain why Maimonides was dissatisfied with the exclusivity of literal or lexical meaning. Lexical analysis was in his eyes subject to ambiguity. In the words of Maimonides:

> "These subtle meanings that nearly elude the minds cannot be expressed in ordinary words, which are the greatest cause leading unto error. For the bounds of expression in all languages are very narrow to us indeed, so that we cannot imagine that meaning to ourselves except through a certain looseness of expression" (I,57; 132–3).
> (*wa-lā tuʿtabaru hāḏihi l-maʿānī d-daqīqa llatī [y]akādu tafūtu [l-]ʾaḏhān bi-l-ʾalfāẓ al-muʿtāda llatī hiya ʾakbar sabab fī t-taġlīṭ li-ʾanna[hu] taḍīqu bināʾ al-ʿibāra ǧiddan ǧiddan fī kull luġa ḥattā lā nataṣawwaru ḏālika l-maʿnā ʾillā bi-tasāmuḥ fī l-ʿibāra* (139) / *wĕlō yitbōnĕnū ʾēllū hāʿinyānīm haddaqqīm kimĕʿāṭ šeyyibbāẓrū min haśśēḵel bĕmillōt nĕhūgōt ʾašer hēm hassibbāh haggĕdōlāh bĕhaṭʿāʾāh kīy yāẓēr bānū haddibbūr mĕʾōd mĕʾōd bĕḵol lāšōn ʿad šellō nĕẓayyēr hāʿinyān hahū ʾellā bĕhāqēl haddibbūr*) (85)

In this view *maʿnā* cannot be sufficiently expressed in the strictness of ordinary words, but is only indicated by "looseness of expression". A second presentation of *maʿnā* as a part of linguistic argumentation is found in the following example:

> "An instance of this is fire: it melts some things, makes others hard, cooks and burns, bleaches and blackens. Thus if man would predicate of fire that it is that which bleaches and blackens, which burns and cooks, which makes hard and which melts, he would say the truth. Accordingly, he who does not know the nature of fire thinks that there subsist in it six diverse notions (Ar: *sittat maʿānin muḫtalifa*), by means of one of which it blackens, whereas it bleaches by means of another, cooks by means of a third, burns by means of a fourth, melts by means of a fifth, and makes hard by means of a sixth – all these actions being opposed to one another, for the meaning of any one of them is different from that of any other. However, he who knows the nature of fire, knows that it performs all these actions by virtue of one active quality, namely, heat" (I,53; 120).
> (*wĕhammāšāl bō hāʾēš tattīḵ qĕẓāt haddĕvārīm wĕtaqpīʾ qĕẓātām tĕvaššēl wĕtiśrōf wĕtalbīn wĕtašḥīr wĕʾillū yĕtāʾēr hāʾādām hāʾēš bĕšehī hammalbenet wĕhammašḥeret wĕhaśśōrefet wĕhammĕvaššelet wĕhammaqpīʾāh wĕhammattīḵāh hāyāh ʾōmēr ʾemet wĕyihyeh mīy šello yēdaʿ ṭevaʿ hāʾēš ḥōšēv šeyyēš bāh šiššāh ʿinyānīm mitḥallĕfīm ʿinyān bō yašḥīr wĕʿinyān ʾāḥēr bō yalbīn wĕʿinyān šĕlīšī bō yĕvaššēl wĕʿinyān rĕvīʿī bō yiśrōf wĕʿinyān ḥamīšī bō yattīḵ wĕʿinyān šiššī bō yaqpīʾ wĕʾēllū kūllām pĕʿūllōt zō hēfeḵ zō ʾēyn ʿinyān pĕʿūllāh mēhem ʿinyān haʾaḥeret ʾŏmnām ʾašer yēdaʿ ṭevaʿ hāʾēš yēdaʿ šebbĕʾēyḵūt ʾaḥat pōʿelet tifʿal kol ʾēllū happĕʿūllōt wĕhū hāḥōm*) (76)

In this respect Maimonides shares the opinion of Saadiah who also thinks

"that languages vary and writings vary, and yet although they vary the *maʿānī* do not change" (1972: 53; Faur 1986: 74). The conceptual and universal *maʿnā* level has to be abstracted from language and can only be grasped by intellectual perception (*ʿaql/śēḵel*) (Faur 1986: 73). The intellectual perception of *maʿnā* is one of the principal objectives in the "Guide of the Perplexed" where Maimonides discusses the attributes referring to God which according to him must be interpreted in negative terms. God can only be perceived negatively, as what He is not, but never as what He is. Consequently, there is no common *maʿnā* between God and His creatures. Negation of the *maʿānī* of attributes applying to God results in a positive knowledge of God, but this negation must be conceptual and cannot be effected at the language level. God has *maʿnā*, although the *ism* can be negated. This *maʿnā* is His essence, absolutely unique, absolutely simple, i.e. not compound, and absolutely inaccessible in positive terms. As a semantic entity, this *maʿnā* acquires significance through opposition and contrast (Faur 1986: 79–83).

How does Maimonides relate his thinking about *maʿnā* to rabbinic tradition? Repeatedly he refers to the saying of Rabbi Ishmael: "The Torah speaks in the language of the sons of man" (*dibbĕrāh Tōrāh kilĕšōn bĕnēy ʾādām*) in order "to denote everything that all men are capable of understanding and representing to themselves at first thought" (I,26; 56) (*maʿnā ḏālika ʾanna kull mā yumkinu n-nās ʾağmaʿ fahmuhu wa-taṣawwuruhu bi-ʾawwal fikrihi* (58) / *ʿinyān ẓeh kīy kŏl mah š^{e}ʾ^{e}fšār livnēy ʾādām kūllām h^{a}vānātō wĕẓiyyūrō bitĕḫillat hamm^{a}ḫ^{a}šāvāh*) (42). The human language of the Torah enables people to grasp a "first" meaning of its words which can often be equated with a literal sense (Hallamish-Kasker 1981: 97–103). The rabbinic idea is that meaning is a function of text, specifically biblical text, and in the "Guide of the Perplexed" figurative interpretation and its consequences for the concept of meaning are described in full accordance with it. Maimonides' general assumption is that language is a means by which meaning is conveyed. The hidden sense is in fact extra-linguistic, but association of words, that is to say, the context of a sentence establishes linguistic meaning. The opposition of outside or lexical sense to inside or hidden sense is much stronger in Maimonides' theory than in rabbinic thought. The rabbis considered *dĕrāš* rather as applied meaning than hidden meaning which seems to be understood by medieval rabbinic commentators as "secret" meaning with aspects of either rationalism or mysticism (*sōd*). Moreover, *dĕrāš* implies a method of generating derived meaning of words and phrases. On the semantic level the literal or lexical sense of these same words and phrases is seen as

integrated or included within the generated meanings. Leaving out fluctuations in accepted standards of literal and midrashic exegesis in the course of time, *děrāš* was essentially not meant as an opposition to *pěšāṭ*, but both modes were part of a "double reading" of the biblical or Talmudic text favouring the multiplicity of meanings. However, figurative interpretation as employed by Maimonides is grasped in terms of hierarchical opposition to lexical sense and is therefore essentially different from *děrāš* in that respect (Faur 1986: xxvii).

In the Hebrew-written *Mišneh Tōrāh*, "Repetition of the Torah", the great halakhic code where the totality of Jewish religious law is systematically presented, the appreciation of *pěšāṭ* and *děrāš* is defined with regard to the commandments of the Torah and the authoritativeness of rabbinic tradition. Maimonides extensively dealt with the "reasons for the commandments" (*ṭ*^{aʿa}*mēy hammiẓwōt*) and his primary goal was to uncover these reasons by philosophic analysis, as he had already said in the "Guide": "All the Laws have a cause… There is a cause for all the commandments; I mean to say, that any particular commandment or prohibition has a useful end" (III,26; 507) (*wa-'inna š-šarīʿa kullahā muʿallala… fa-kāna al-miẓwōt kulluhā ʿindahum lahā ʿilla 'aʿnī 'anna li-ḏālika l-'amr 'aw an-nahy ġāya mufīda* (552–3) / *wěšehammiẓwōt kūllām yēš lāhem sibbāh… kol hammiẓwōt 'im kēn yēš lāhem sibbāh rōẓeh lōmar kīy lammiẓwāh hahū 'ō la'*^{a}*zhārāh yēš taḵlīt mōʿīlāh*) (39). This basic Maimonidean attitude is found throughout the *Mišneh Tōrāh* and guidelines are offered for a sustained inquiry into the reasons of ceremonial and moral legislation. Elsewhere in the *Mišneh Tōrāh* it is stated that "he who uncovers the face of the Torah and interprets the commandments in a sense other than the literal is a heretic" (Faur 1978: 188). Talmudic matters were also taken into this more flexible perspective in which tradition and philosophy interact. Maimonides justifies occasional changes and modifications in standard *děrāš* by accepting the fact that midrashic exposition can sometimes be in flagrant contradiction to the plain meaning of the biblical or Talmudic text. It seems to bother him that *děrāš* in the quality of "received interpretation" can be so remote from the *pěšāṭ*; in some instances he tries to reconcile the discrepancy between the two by rational argumentation. (Twersky 1980: 473; Halivni 1991: 83–88).

6.2 The influence of Maimonides

Maimonidean thought made a strong and immediate impact in both Islamic

and Christian environments. One celebrated exegete and grammarian exhibits a great deal of faithfulness to Maimonides. This is the Provencal scholar David ben Josef Qimḥi (c. 1160-c. 1235), known by his acronym as Radaq. He became famous because of his summary of Hebrew language and vocabulary called *Sēfer Mik̲lōl*, "Book of Entirety", which consists of two parts: a grammatical part known by its Hebrew name as *Mik̲lōl*, "Compendium", and a content part called *Sēfer Šŏrāšīm*, "Book of Roots". The *Mik̲lōl* exercised much influence upon later study and teaching of the Hebrew language due to the introduction of new Hebrew terminology and formulations of linguistic description. Editions of Qimḥi's grammar and lexicon circulated among famous Christian Hebraists of later periods who dominated Hebrew studies from the 16th century onwards like Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) and Sebastian Munster (1489–1552) (Loewe 1971).

Qimḥi's commentaries generally display a combination of philological interpretation with figurative and midrashic statements. Qimḥi clearly prefers the inner meaning of the biblical text "which is principal for those who are versed in science". For example, the snake speaking to the woman is confusing according to its outer meaning (*'inyān nigleh*) but the inner meaning (*'inyān nistār*) is clear: (Gen. 3: 1: *yēš liš'ōl 'al 'inyan 'ᵃmīrat hannāḥāš lā'īšāh... wěhā'inyān bazzeh měvūlbāl mě'ōd lěfīy hannigleh 'ᵃvāl lěfīy hannistār hā'inyān měvō'ār*) (1970: 33). Qimḥi developed the esoteric exegesis of the Bible in agreement with the Maimonidean theory of double meaning: the outer meaning is intended for the masses and the inner meaning for those learned in philosophy, the rationalists. Maimonides often alluded to an inner meaning without explicit description or gave a short explanation, but Qimḥi tended to go to extremes in his explanations with much greater detail and elaboration than Maimonides (Talmage 1968: 205–213). No wonder that he was singled out for critical observations by opponents of Maimonidean philosophy. Interestingly enough, it was Qimḥi who attacked the Christian mode of figurative interpretation for its inconsistency and irrationality. Qimḥi as well as other Jewish rationalists of his time considered the inner and outer level of meaning as equally legitimate, but the Christian turn from literalism to the spiritual treatment of commandments or the christological approach to prophetic passages was strongly rejected with the help of rational arguments (Talmage 1967: 218–20).

Another famous personality who attempted to achieve a synthesis of traditional exegesis and philosophical intellectualism was Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman or Nahmanides, also known by his acronym as Ramban (1194–

1270). Nahmanides was familiar with the growing opposition against the writings and philosophy of Maimonides and adopted a conciliatory stand in this dispute. His respect for reason prompted him to admit that *děrāš* contains an element of phantasy, but it functions at the same time as an ornament for the ethical teaching and hidden truth of Judaism. Nahmanides fully accepts the hermeneutical principles that the rabbis used to interpret the Torah, and consistently tries to discover the coherence between *pěšāṭ* and *děrāš*. In a commentary to the Introduction of Maimonides' *Sēfer Hammiẓwōt*, the "Book of Commandments", he states that Scripture cannot be explained exclusively by *pěšāṭ*: "We possess midrashic interpretation side by side with literal exposition without violating either of them. Truly, Scripture tolerates both of them and both are part of the truth" (*'ēyn hammiqrā yōẓē miyědēy pěšūṭō 'ᵃvāl yēš midrāš ʿim pěšūṭō wě'ēynō yōẓē miyědēy kol 'eḥād mēhem 'ᵃvāl yisbōl hakkātūv 'et hakkol wěyihyū šnēyhem 'ᵉmet*) (Schewel 1981: 45; Harris 1995: 90–92). In the practice of his exegetical work Nahmanides mostly adheres to *pěšāṭ* and his rational ideas should be viewed from that perspective, although at times he too engages in mystical or allegorical statements.

The struggle for and against the interpretation of Scripture in a philosophical spirit continued in subsequent generations, with the balance increasingly tilting against the rationalists. This in itself did not lead to the abandonment of plain meaning, only to its being sought in different directions. The anti-rationalist tendency was felt in Germany during the 13th century where a group of *ḥᵃsīdīm* or "pious men" developed a system of secret meanings of the Torah and its commandments (Dan 1968: 79–83). In southern Europe commentators shared the view that the literal meaning of the biblical text must be regarded as authentic, yet hidden meanings had to be identified. A fine illustration of this attitude is found in the works of Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508) who in 1492 experienced the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and fled to Italy. Abravanel was aware of the fact that in contradistinction to popular tendencies in traditional Midrash the role and value of rational exegesis was very limited because of its exclusive application by a small enlightened minority. He therefore opted for the midrashic method and assimilated views and terms of the rationalists placing himself in a unique position between traditional and rationalist expositors of the Bible. Abravanel did not reject figurative interpretation, but stated that its application must be secondary to the *pěšāṭ* of the biblical text and not supersede it in any way. His expositions are least of all drawn from philosophy or metaphysics, but rather

personal and often provocative statements of a social, political and ethical nature (Netanyahu 1953: 107; Barzilay 1967: 109–118).

A younger contemporary of Abravanel was also active in Italy as a commentator without a uniform exegetical standard. His name was rabbi Obadiah Seforno (1470–1550), teacher of the great Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) during the years 1498–1500. Seforno's interpretations are often in line with *pĕšāṭ*, but there are also numerous deviations. These inconsistencies are an early sign of the continuous struggle in distinguishing *pĕšāṭ* and *dĕrāš* in Jewish exegesis leading to new methods of reconciling contradictions that are necessary if one is to maintain the divinity of Scripture (Finkel 1896: 53–54; Halivni 1991: 33–35).

Still in the 12th century a younger contemporary of Maimonides, Joseph ben Judah ibn ʿAqnīn (1150–1220), wrote a commentary on the book of Canticles. Ibn ʿAqnīn expounds each verse according to three different ways: 1. the grammatical way based on Spanish-Hebrew linguistics, mostly leading to a definition of literal meaning; 2. the rabbinic way, in the context of Canticles a presentation of the midrashic tradition on the historical and eschatological aspects of the dialogue between the community of Israel and God; 3. the scientific way described as 'the secret exegesis' (*pērūš hassōd*) implying logical and philosophical explanations on his personal account. In this part of his verse-by-verse commentary he describes the human soul aspiring to unite itself with the Active Intellect (*haśśēḵel happōʿēl*), a concept strongly reminiscent of Maimonidean views (Halkin 1964: 494–97). At the same time Ibn ʿAqnīn describes in Chapter 27 of his ethical compilation *Ṭibb an-nufūs as-salīma wa-muʿālaǧat an-nufūs al-ʾalīma*, "The Hygiene of the Healthy Souls and the Treatment of the Ailing Souls", that the study of Hebrew linguistics is only secondary to the study of Bible, poetry and Talmud (Güdemann 1968: 54–58). This depreciatory attitude towards the status of Hebrew grammar can also be detected in Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Falaquera's *Sēfer Hammĕvaqqēš*, "The Book of the Searcher", completed in 1263. Interestingly enough, Ibn Falaquera defines grammar and linguistic studies not as an end in themselves, but as serving a more essential purpose: the understanding of *ʿinyānīm* or meaningful ideas (Zwiep 1993: 21–43).

Falaquera's thinking is also reflected in the famous work *Mᵃʿᵃśeh ʾĒfōd*, "The Work of the Efod", written by the Catalan grammarian and philosopher Profiat Duran in 1403. Duran (1350–1414) was strongly influenced by late medieval scholastic thought which underlies all chapters of his work. His outline of the essence of language and descriptive grammar marks the end

of the medieval Jewish linguistic tradition. He based himself to a large extent upon the *Sēfer Miḵlōl* of David Qimḥi and acquainted his readers with Qimḥi's views on the levels of meaning in biblical language. Duran's book therefore promoted the traditional outline of Qimḥi stimulating both Jewish and Christian Hebrew studies.

There hardly was any grammatical investigation of meaning until the days of Christian Hebraists who adopted the Latin model of grammar for the study of the Hebrew language, including observations on Hebrew semantics. They, too, confined themselves to a synchronous analysis of the Hebrew language in explaining the meaning of Hebrew vocabulary. The Humanist ideal of the *homo trilinguis* (Latin, Greek, Hebrew) fostered Hebrew and Semitic studies among Christians. There were scholars like Albert Schultens (1686–1750) who turned to comparative Semitic linguistics for establishing lexical meaning in Hebrew, coming close to modern insights in Semitic linguistics. The study of meaning in the Hebrew tradition is then entering a new era.

7. Conclusion

The study of meaning in the biblical, rabbinic and medieval Hebrew traditions cannot be disconnected from the realm of exegesis. Exegetical remarks on lexical meaning at the level of words can already be found throughout the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. Rabbinic treatment of the biblical text is a type of "inferential semantics" by which non-literal aspects of meaning may be taken as literal aspects of meaning. In rabbinic interpretive activities two terms were introduced which played a major role in the development of medieval Hebrew exegesis: *pěšāṭ*, "obvious, literal meaning" and *děrāš*, "resultant interpretation", "meaning generated by exegetical techniques". The *děrāš* system of explanation with its concern for the meaning of realities that lie beyond the word was seriously challenged by the exegetical practice of *pěšāṭ* as can be demonstrated by commentators at the end of the 11th century and during the 12th century. Rashi and his grandsons Rashbam and Rabbenu Tam intended to interpret Scripture in a simple and accessible manner in accordance with the grammatical conventions of their time.

Most results were gained among the exegetes and philosophers who reconsidered the rabbinic heritage in the context of Islam and the conflict with the Karaites. Both Rabbanite and Karaite grammarians, defenders of the derived and literal exegesis respectively, discussed meaning for the sake of interpretive clarification, strongly supported by their bilingualism. The study of

grammar and philosophy was united in the personality of Saadiah Gaon who held significant views on meaning on a linguistic or a conceptual level. Under the impact of contemporary Arabic linguistics, Jewish grammarians developed the science of the Hebrew language. Their scholarship was never of a purely linguistic type, but remained largely within the context of religious and legal interpretation. This in turn exerted influence upon the senses ascribed to biblical words and phrases. There was hardly any attention to meaning as a grammatical category, but the lexical and grammatical studies fostered a general interest in linguistic evidence challenging the exclusivity of traditional religious interpretations.

Maimonides discussed methods of interpretation in the framework of his logical and philosophical studies and concluded that exegetical principles, and the derivations they produce, do not lead to one authoritative understanding of the true meaning of biblical texts. He observed that the Torah simultaneously speaks in human language and communicates metaphysical knowledge. The double stand of the Torah of accommodating a message to its readers and disclosing its profound meaning to an elitistic audience evoked Maimonides' revolutionary intellectualizing attitude towards Judaism in the Guide of the Perplexed. The appreciation of the relationship between expressions and their meanings is paramount in a considerable part of his argumentation. His evaluation of plain meaning and his relative outspokenness on the ways of figurative interpretation triggered intense discussions between strong adherents and vehement critics for centuries to come. Most of these reactions revolved around the questions of proper exegesis of Scripture and rabbinic literature, and its consequences for the foundations of Jewish praxis. A fundamental part of these late medieval debates retained a formidable challenge for the various denominations of modern Judaism.

8. Suggestions for further reading

1. Some standard introductions to Hebrew grammatical tradition are Kutscher (1971, 1982), Rabin (1970, 1973), Loewe (1994) and Sáenz-Badillos (1993).

2. For an outline of Hebrew semantics, see Rabin (1968) and Barr (1961, 1968).

3. A good comprehensive study of rabbinic literature is offered in Strack-Stemberger (1982). For a discussion of rabbinic hermeneutics, see Fishbane (1993).

4. An overview of medieval Jewish thinking may be found in Guttmann (1973) and Sirat (1985). For Saadiah's linguistic activity, see Skoss (1955). The views of the Karaites are illustrated by Ben-Shammai (1977) and Nemoy (1980). Recent research on Rashi in medieval Jewish culture is collected by Sed-Rajna (1993).

5. Modes of interpretation in the medieval Christian milieu are discussed by Smalley (1983) and Van Zwieten (1992). For Jewish-Christian relations concerning exegesis, see Hailperin (1942), Hruby (1973), Graboïs (1975) and Uffenheimer (1988).

6. The literature on Maimonides' thought is extensive, see Wolfson (1973, 1977) and Levinger (1989) who offer important contributions to the discussion of Maimonidean concern for meaning.

7. On the general issue of meaning in modern time, see Levinas (1987).

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Part Two

THE SANSKRIT TRADITION

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“Well,” said Owl, “the customary procedure in such cases is as follows.”

“What does Crustimoney Proseedcake mean?” said Pooh.

“For I am a Bear of Very Little Brain, and long words Bother me.”

“It means the Thing to Do.”

“As long as it means that, I don’t mind,” said Pooh humbly.

A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, 1926; ch. 4.

1. Introduction*

At an early stage the Sanskrit religious, philosophical and scientific tradition was confronted with problems of meaning, especially with regard to the sacred texts at its root: the Vedas. The Brāhmaṇa-texts (ca. 8th–4th century BCE, cf. Gonda 1975:20–2), giving speculative interpretations and explanations of Vedic texts and rituals, can be considered the first landmark in the emergence of semantics in the Vedic-Sanskrit tradition, if we take ‘Semantics’ in the general sense of “the study and representation of the meaning of language expressions, and the relationships of meaning among them” (Allan 1992:394). From the point of view of our texts, there is a certain continuity between the way problems of meaning in language expressions are dealt with and the way meaning problems in other areas of human reality—apart from rituals, dreams (cf. e.g. Esnoul 1959), for instance, and even stars and thunder can be considered to have ‘meaning’ (cf. Staal 1989:455–57; and Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 5.2, discussed below)—are dealt with. In the present essay, however, the focus will be on ‘meaning in (human) language’.

This brings us to some branches of learning which developed in close connection with the Brāhmaṇas, and which deal in specialized ways with meaning problems in the Vedic texts. Mention may here first be made of the

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* Important suggestions for improvement in this contribution were made not only by the other authors of the present volume, but also by J. Bronkhorst, H. Isaacson, T. Vetter.

Nirukta, a discipline (the beginnings of which are difficult to date) dealing with the etymological explanation of words, and the Mīmāṁsā, a system of rules (originating ca. 5th-4th century BCE?) giving exegetic guidelines for the interpretation of sentences in Vedic ritual texts. Both branches of learning continue, refine and systematize some of the trends which are already present in the Brāhmaṇa-texts.

A solid foundation for profound analyses and discussions of semantic issues was only laid with the formal description of Sanskrit in Pāṇini's grammar (ca. 350 BCE?, von Hinüber 1989:34), which was the culmination point of an earlier tradition of grammatical descriptions about which we know very little. In his grammar Pāṇini mainly dealt with only the forms of the words, but in trying to exclude the 'everyday meaning' of words he provides the users of his grammar with a number of valuable insights concerning semantic problems. The centuries after Pāṇini saw not only the establishment of a tradition of commentators and interpreters of his grammar, but also the formation of diverse philosophical schools formulating doctrines on reality and man's place in it. Some of the earliest tangible traces of the development of philosophical schools can be found among the Buddhist authors of Abhidharma-texts (from ca. 3rd century BCE), which are texts attempting to systematize the ontological elements in the Buddha's discourses. The Mīmāṁsā system of Vedic exegesis also developed into a philosophical school, which in its classical form presupposes Pāṇini in matters of grammatical analysis. Each of the various schools of different religious and cultural backgrounds developed linguistic and semantic theories, which can usually be seen as a function of, on the one hand, generally accepted grammatical categories and distinctions, and, on the other, their philosophical commitments in the fields of ontology and epistemology. In other words, semantic theories in the Sanskrit tradition arose where the formal description of the language intersected with ontological questions ('what is real?') and epistemological ones ('what can be known?').

The earliest work still extant in which semantic problems are the main focus is a work in the Pāṇinian tradition, viz. Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* (5th century CE). For centuries to come, semantic discussions in the Sanskrit tradition would take place within the framework of theoretical possibilities pointed out in this work. After the Brāhmaṇa-texts, the Nirukta, the Mīmāṁsā, and Pāṇini's grammar, it constitutes a major fifth landmark in the —Sanskritic, for here we disregard the Dravidian developments in the South—Indian concern with semantic problems. The absolute dates of the preceding four

landmarks are very uncertain; even the relative chronology is not always certain, as in the case of the relation between Pāṇini and the extant text of the Nirukta. But Bhartṛhari clearly presupposes and draws heavily on all these earlier achievements. Immediately after Bhartṛhari, the development of the logical-semantic theory of Apoha by the Buddhist logicians Diṅnāga (sometimes spelt Dignāga; dated 5th-6th century) and Dharmakīrti (7th century) should be considered an important sixth landmark in the Indian concern with semantic problems. In an entirely different direction, a major contribution to semantics in the Sanskrit tradition was made with the development of the Dhvani-theory in the *Dhvanyāloka*, a 9th century work on Poetics, which forms the seventh landmark. The eighth landmark is the development of precise systems of knowledge representation and competing theories of *śābdabodha* "verbal knowledge" in the schools of logic, exegesis and grammar, after the development of Navya-Nyāya or "new logic" in the work of Gaṅgeśa (ca. 13th century) (with roots in long standing controversies on logic, ontology and epistemology between different Brahminical, Buddhist, and Jaina thinkers and schools).

The literature in the Sanskrit tradition dealing with semantic problems is extremely extensive. In the present essay emphasis will be on the early period up to and including Bhartṛhari. Even with regard to this period only some major points and developments can be discussed in the limited space available. The developments from Bhartṛhari to the classical and modern period and the present will only be summarized very briefly.

Language is never used and understood in a vacuum and for a proper evaluation of the semantic discussions in the Sanskrit tradition, we have to be familiar with some general features of that tradition. Unlike most other language names, the name 'Sanskrit' is not the name of a people or country or nation. The name *saṁskṛta,* which literally means "polished, well-formed", points to its socio-linguistic position throughout the ages: it was the cultured language of the well-educated, of the social and religious elite. The term Sanskrit properly applies to the regulated language which developed some centuries after Pāṇini's grammar. By extension, however, it refers to the closely related earlier forms of Old-Indo-Aryan which are used in the Vedic texts (cf. Whitney, 1888:xi–xv; Coulson, 1976:xv–xxvi; also Thieme 1994). Geographically, the northern parts of South Asia—present day Afghanistan, Pakistan and north India—form the area in which Sanskrit and the older phases of Old-Indo-Aryan have been spoken (on the Vedic dialects in this period see e.g. Witzel 1989), at least by the privileged classes. In the

course of time (from the first few centuries of the common era onwards) a standardized Sanskrit spread over the entire Indian subcontinent and beyond as a language for learned discussions and royal (often bilingual) inscriptions (on the South and Southeast Asian Sanskrit 'cosmopolis' from ca. 300 to 1300 CE see now Pollock 1996).

When the Buddha, living and teaching in the north east of the Indian subcontinent in about the 4th century BCE (? cf. Bechert 1991–92), rejected Vedic rituals because of their violence (cf. Falk 1988), the texts which prescribe them must already have been standardized to a considerable extent. The Buddha rejected not only the Vedic rituals and texts, but also the polished language of the priestly class (the Brahmins), and chose to teach in a language which common people could understand more easily. In about the same period and in the same area, another religious and spiritual teacher, Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism, rejected Vedic ritual and the Brahminical language for similar reasons. Neither the words of the Buddha nor those of Mahāvīra are directly recorded, but the earliest Buddhist and Jaina scriptures are available in Pali and Ardhamāgadhī respectively, two Middle-Indo-Aryan languages which are both grammatically and lexically still rather close to the *saṁskṛta* or Sanskrit language of the Brahmins (cf. Bechert 1980 and von Hinüber 1986).

In approximately the same period, in an area to the west of the place where the Buddha and Mahāvīra lived and taught (probably in a place which is now in Pakistan), Pāṇini wrote his famous grammar which was meant to cover both the language of the sacred Vedic texts and the language of well-educated speakers. In the centuries following Pāṇini, Brahminical culture was very much concerned with continuing and reviving the Vedic tradition. Those who could actively participate in Vedic ceremonies were the members of the priestly class (Brahmins), and to a lesser extent those belonging to the ruling and mercantile class (Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas). Apart from these three classes (to which the Sanskrit tradition refers as *varṇa*s, e.g. Wezler 1986, Halbfass 1991:347–90), there is a fourth class or *varṇa* of servants, labourers, artisans and artists (Śūdras), who are excluded from Vedic rituals and Vedic learning. Still lower are those outside all four classes. Membership of the classes (also called 'estates', but to be distinguished from the much more numerous 'castes') was basically a matter of descent and the performance of the duties of the respective class. All this has given Brahminical culture the conservative outlook which was also reflected in their attitude towards language. The Buddhists and the Jainas, on the other hand, were intent on expanding their numbers by convincing people to accept their message, which they tried to

express in the language of the masses. It is noteworthy that the Buddhist and Jaina canons (as well as the extensive Vedic literature) were originally exclusively orally transmitted, as writing—though early forms of the fourth or fifth century BCE have been found in Sri Lanka, Allchin 1995:176–78—started to be used on an appreciable scale only in the time of king Aśoka (3rd century BCE), the important supporter of Buddhism, who wrote his famous rock-edicts in different local languages throughout his empire.

Although they originally opted for the local languages, even the Buddhists and after them the Jainas started to write and communicate in Sanskrit around the beginning of the first millennium CE. In the multilingual environment of South Asia, Sanskrit was in a perfect position to fulfil the role of a 'link language' between speakers of different dialects and languages. Availability of a standard grammar also made Sanskrit an attractive medium to conserve the message of the Buddha. The Jainas started to use Sanskrit mainly in polemical works, and wrote Sanskrit commentaries on their ancient scriptures in Ardhamāgadhī. In addition, we know of Sanskrit works of a sceptic nature in which all doctrines, whether Brahmin, Buddhist or Jaina, are rejected (e.g. Franco 1987). Moreover, an extensive literature on more secular subjects developed (in the form of poems, dramas, stories). Sanskrit remained the language of a cultural elite, but was less exclusively tied up with the Brahmins.

Thus, the Sanskrit tradition has its roots in the Vedic texts and the Brahminical attempts to conserve and interpret these texts, but to this should be added that since early times the polemical discussions with those who rejected the Brahminical tradition, mainly the Buddhists and Jainas, were of decisive importance for the development and formulation of philosophical doctrines within this tradition. In fact, the Buddhists and Jainas had semantic traditions of their own, centering around their early sacred texts in Middle-Indo-Aryan languages. As such, these traditions fall outside the scope of the present essay on semantics in the Sanskrit tradition, though they are to be taken into account for their extensive later literature in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit tradition is the dynamic product of the interactions of these different philosophical, religious and cultural currents. Even within the Brahminical, Buddhist or Jaina traditions, numerous disciplines, doctrines, and branches of learning are continuously interacting with each other. That is why a discussion of semantics in the Sanskrit tradition should not be limited to one specialized discipline, e.g. Pāṇinian grammar. Rather, an attempt should be made to introduce to the reader the major participants and the major issues in the dialogues which continue over centuries.

With these introductory remarks, the ground is prepared for a conspectus of the remainder of this essay. The next section (2), provides a first introduction to the main terminology in discussions on problems of meaning and semantics in the Sanskrit tradition. Section 3 deals with the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas and ancillary disciplines. In Section 4, attention is paid to one of the Vedic ancillary disciplines, viz. the Nirukta which is the name both of the discipline and of the most important text dealing with 'etymology' in the sense of "explanation of word meaning through derivation". Section 5 discusses some aspects related to semantics in the elaborate Mīmāṁsā-system of exegesis of Vedic ritual texts, mainly on the basis of the oldest texts. Section 6 takes up for discussion the role of semantics in Pāṇini's grammar, which is at the same time the earliest, most compact and most comprehensive formal description of a language. Much more than Nirukta and Mīmāṁsā, grammar (its Sanskrit name is *vyākaraṇa*) appears as a discipline which has emancipated itself from its Vedic background, although there are, of course, important continuities. Attention is also paid to Kātyāyana and Patañjali whose comments and reactions to Pāṇini's grammar are rich in discussions on semantic and philosophical problems. Section 7 deals with the early periods of two philosophical schools, the Nyāya (focussing on epistemological and logical problems) and Vaiśeṣika (interested in ontology and logic). Section 8 is devoted to a brief discussion of the Buddhists and Jainas with regard to their own exegetic and semantic traditions (originally not in Sanskrit) and with regard to their contributions to the Sanskrit tradition. Next, Bhartṛhari's mature treatment of a great variety of semantic issues, on the formal basis of Pāṇini's grammar and in the light of philosophical doctrines of important schools of his time, is central in Section 9. Section 10 touches briefly on later developments in philosophical schools, especially the Apoha-theory developed by Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti; the *sphoṭa*-theory of later grammarians and poeticians; and, finally, the development of sophisticated theories of verbal comprehension (*śābdabodha*) which are recently receiving some renewed attention in the context of artificial intelligence in computer applications. Some conclusions are formulated in Section 11, and Section 12 gives suggestions for further reading.

2. Terminology

We have mentioned three main traditions which have contributed to the development of grammatical, linguistic, and semantic theories within the

general Sanskrit tradition: they are the Vedic-Brahminical tradition, the Buddhist tradition and the Jaina tradition, each with a collection of sacred texts of its own, and each subdivided into various communities and traditions. Moreover, there were specialized branches of learning dealing with language, especially the schools of grammar, exegesis and logic, usually belonging to one of the different traditions.

The question "what is meaning?" should, in fact, be asked for each of these communities, traditions and branches of learning separately. Nevertheless, because of the climate of discussion and dispute, it can be maintained that there was a sort of common ground in terminology, presuppositions and conceptual dichotomies underlying the discussions and disagreements. Moreover, there were works devoted specifically to semantic problems which (attempt to) stand partly above the divisions into competing schools and traditions. The oldest extant and in several respects most important of such works is Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya. In its discussion of different theories it develops a terminology of its own in which the other theories are described, explained and contrasted.

Which Sanskrit term is used in these contexts to discuss "meaning"? The most common equivalent in Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* and in the period of classical Sanskrit is no doubt *artha* (cf. Monier-Williams 1851:489 under "meaning (sense, signification)"). Apart from this common and general term there is a host of more technical terms often linked to certain semantic theories or to well-defined aspects of meaning, for instance: *abhiprāya* "what one has in mind, intention", *vivakṣā* "wish to express, intention", *śakti* "power, semantic potential", *vākyārtha* "sentence meaning", *vācya* and *abhidheya*, both meaning "that what is to be expressed", *padārtha* "object, word meaning", *viṣaya* "subject, topic", *abhidhā* "literal, directly expressed meaning of a word" (in contradistinction to *lakṣaṇā* "secondary or metaphorical meaning" and *vyañjanā* "suggested meaning"). In some discussions it is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the meaning of a linguistic expression and a 'concept' (cf. the term *prajñapti*, below p. 108, and *pratyaya* "understanding, concept"), for instance, when externally real objects are not acknowledged and the only candidates to play the role of referents of words are 'concepts'.

The term *artha* already figures in the older Vedic literature, but is there used in non-linguistic contexts in the sense of "aim", "purpose"; "enterprise", "work". Here, *artha* cannot be considered an equivalent of 'meaning'. Nevertheless, there is a continuity between these older senses and some

of the later senses in linguistic and semantic contexts, e.g. in the theory in which the sentence meaning (*vākya-artha*) is understood as purpose and as something directed towards action.

While English 'meaning' is clearly connected with and derived from the verb 'to mean', the word *artha* has no clear or transparent derivation from a Sanskrit verb. Instead, it is itself the basis of a denominative *arthayate*, which means "to request, beg; to strive to obtain" (apparently more connected with the sense "purpose" than with the sense "meaning" for *artha*). Etymologically, the word is probably connected with the verb *ṛccháti* "goes towards, reaches", or *ṛṇóti* "arises, moves" (Mayrhofer 1956:51). There are other Sanskrit verbs to express the English 'to mean' and related senses, e.g.: *abhi-pra-i* "to approach; to intend, aim at; to think of, mean"; *vac* "to say, tell, signify"; *abhi-dhā* "to express, denote"; *ud-diś* "to point out, signify; to refer to; to mean, intend".

For equivalents of English 'semantics' we have to turn to the later Sanskrit literature. Semantic topics and issues are often discussed by the different philosophical schools (Navya-Nyāya or neo-logic, Mīmāṁsā or school of Vedic exegesis, Grammar), and these are usually placed under the heading of *śābdabodha* "verbal knowledge" or "understanding from language". Hence, the term *śābdabodha* can be considered an approximate equivalent of our "semantics" in some of its major concerns. Especially thinkers belonging to Navya-Nyāya (from ca. 13th century) made continuous efforts to arrive at a disambiguated, highly technical terminology in the field of "verbal knowledge" when they developed systems of knowledge representation in accordance with their doctrinal starting points. This stimulated the other schools to employ the same or an adapted terminology to develop alternative systems of knowledge representation.

Because the term *artha* also continues to be used in more technical discussions (together with the other, more technical terms), and because, moreover, the focus in this essay is on the older period, it will suffice for our purposes to take *artha* as the central term of our enquiry, and to introduce specific other terms in the course of our discussion wherever appropriate.

While this term can be regarded, roughly, as an equivalent of English 'meaning', some important distinctions are to be made from the outset. In modern academic discourse, the term 'meaning' is usually understood in a Fregian sense: the 'meaning' of a word is distinguished sharply from its 'referent' (or 'intension' from 'extension', 'connotation' from 'denotation'; cf. Quine 1961:9, 21, 47). This distinction is often illustrated with the two

expressions 'morning star' and 'evening star': they refer to the same physical object—have the same referent—viz. the planet Venus, but their meaning is different: the morning star is visible in the morning, the evening star in the evening.

The term *artha*, on the other hand, may equally refer to the meaning and to the external thing or referent. Even if a distinction equivalent to the one between meaning and referent was clearly noticed by some of the Indian authors, this did not lead to the adoption of a generally accepted terminology expressive of this distinction. Bhartṛhari, for instance, may occasionally speak of a *buddhy-artha* "thing in the mind", and of a *bāhya artha* "external thing", but at other places it is only the context which can make clear whether he is speaking of a 'thing in the mind' in a sense close to our 'meaning', or of an external object. Some of the semantic arguments and discussions can only be understood if a continuity between the external object and the meaning is accepted. And there are schools of thought in which a sharp distinction between the two would be philosophically impossible. For this reason, the term which we found in our search for an equivalent of the English word 'meaning', should in fact often be translated by a term expressing a certain continuity between meaning and object, for which I would like to suggest 'thing-meant' (not as an equivalent of 'referent' as in Gardiner's model (cf. Gardiner 1951 and Raja 1969:12–4), but rather in the sense of 'the thing-as-it-is-meant' in contrast with 'the thing-as-it-is'"). The term *artha*, in other words, comprises more than just the linguistic meaning, but it is nevertheless the most common equivalent of our 'meaning' in semantic discussions.

Another important distinction which is not immediately clear in Sanskrit-expressions with *artha* is the distinction between 'a meaning' or 'the meaning' and 'meaning in general' or the distinction between 'a / the external thing' and 'external reality'. It is the distinction between 'concrete, particular' and 'general, abstract' which in English and other European languages is expressed by the presence/absence of the definite and indefinite article (both articles are unknown in Sanskrit).

The linguistic model in semantic discussions in the Sanskrit tradition is usually dualistic (or dyadic): the *artha* is the *artha* of a *śabda* "linguistic unit". A good number of these discussions can be understood fairly adequately if one reverts to a commonsense picture of language as consisting of linguistic items having meanings (cf. Alston 1986:49–50) and forgets the ways modern scholars have tried to improve on it "by critically digging

deeper'' (Popper 1972:104–5) in order to appreciate the ways Sanskrit authors attempted to do the same.

The meaning of the word *śabda*, which does not occur in the older Vedic texts, is ''sound, noise''. It is especially used for ''speech sound'', ''word'', ''language''. Its etymology is not entirely clear (perhaps connected with the verbal stem *śap* ''to curse'': Debrunner & Wackernagel 1954:723; Mayrhofer 1976:296). For interpreting the term *śabda*, as in the case of the term *artha*, we have to make distinctions which often remain unexpressed in the Sanskrit original but become clear in the context of the discussion and the philosophical background of the text. First, *śabda* may, on the one hand, refer to the physical sounds, on the other to a (meaningful or significative) linguistic unit revealed by, but different from, the physical sounds. In different texts and contexts more specific terms can be used to express the physical sound (e.g. *dhvani*, *nāda*), and the non-physical nature of *śabda* can be emphasized by adding the qualification *buddhistha* ''residing in the mind'' or by the special term *sphoṭa* ''linguistic unit revealed by sounds''. But the general term *śabda* continues to be used in these distinct specific senses also. Second, *śabda* may refer to any string of sounds, ranging from a single phoneme to words and sentences. In addition, there are special terms here too, e.g.: *varṇa* or *akṣara* for ''phoneme'', *pada* for ''word'', *vākya* for ''sentence''. The question to what extent the two extremes on this scale, the phoneme and the sentence, are directly meaningful or have meaning only in a derived sense is an issue in the Sanskrit tradition, different positions having been defended by different thinkers (cf. §6.2, p. 94, and Houben 1995b:48–51). The third distinction is again to be made in the dimension particular – general: *śabda* may refer to a concrete linguistic unit (phoneme, word, sentence etc.) but also to language in general.

A simple dualistic model is already found in Vedic literature, but expressed, not in terms of *śabda* and *artha*, but in terms of *nā́ma* ''name'' and *rūpá* ''(observable) form'', sometimes in the compound *nāmarūpa* ''name and (observable) form''. A more complete model to evaluate the more sophisticated discussions in the later Sanskrit tradition, however, would rather have to be fourfold, taking into account some of the distinctions pointed out above:

śabda		*artha*	
sound	signifier	signified	thing or object
(physical)	word	meaning	
	sentence	thing-meant	thing-meant
	(phoneme)		

Of course, models like this in which English terms are used which could be and have been problematized in various ways, are only first approximations against the background of which further distinctions and contrasts are to be pointed out. In some contexts the difference between physical sound and the signifier is suppressed, and we are left with a triangle of notions roughly equivalent to 'word', 'meaning' and 'object'. In the *Yoga-Sūtra*, for instance, it is observed that usually *śabda* "word", *pratyaya* "concept", and *artha* "object", are mixed up in our experience (see below, §9.1, p. 114). In other contexts, the distinction between meaning (or concept) and object is practically ignored, or the distinction is made only to reject it for philosophical reasons (e.g. because no real external existents are accepted in one's ontology, as in some Buddhist schools).

To understand terms and discussions concerning linguistic and semantic topics between different philosophers it is therefore as important to be aware of the conceptual distinctions between different terms as it is to be aware of the rejection of distinctions. In all contexts it is useful to have the fourfold model at hand in order to locate specific semantic theories in the broader context of other systems in the Sanskrit tradition (and perhaps in the European and other traditions as well).

3. Awareness of language and meaning in early Vedic texts and ancillary disciplines

3.1 The Vedic hymns

The intricate system of the mainly orally transmitted Vedic texts centre around the performance of rituals in which fire, the exhilarating Soma-beverage, and sacred hymns and utterances occupy a central place. The main body of texts was already current some 2500 years ago, the time when they and the rituals to which they belong were well-known to the Buddha but rejected by him in favour of his own doctrine of right action, meditation and liberation.

The ancient texts are preserved mainly through a system of oral transmission (cf. Staal 1961). The precision with which an extensive text such as the Ṛgveda has been transmitted over the centuries and over a geographical distance of thousands of kilometers is remarkable. The Ṛgveda is recited in three versions, which differ in the way rules for euphonical change (*sandhi*) are applied between the words in a verse. In the first version, the words are

recited continuously, and wherever applicable the euphonical changes affect the final or initial phonemes of the words. This version is called the "continuous recitation" (*saṁhitā-pāṭha*), and may be represented as ABCDE (where A, B, C etc. are the words in the verse). The second version is the "word-for-word recitation" (*pada-pāṭha*), in which the words of a verse are recited one by one, without any euphonical changes: A, B, C, D, E. The third version is the "step-by-step recitation" (*krama-pāṭha*), in which the words are recited in groups of two, and euphonical changes are alternately applied between two words only: AB, BC, CD, DE. In some cases the "word-for-word" recitation offers help in the interpretation of a hymn by showing how a verse is to be divided into words. The main importance of this threefold system of recitation, however, is that it contributed greatly to the conservation of the mere form of the words.

The Vedic texts comprise, first of all, collections (Saṁhitās) of hymns. The collection which is generally considered the most important and in several respects the oldest is the Ṛgveda-Saṁhitā. In addition, there are Saṁhitās belonging to the Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. Next, also the Brāhmaṇa-texts are considered to be a part of the Vedas. The Brāhmaṇa-texts, which we will consider more closely below, comment on the hymns in their context of ritual performances.

The Vedic hymns comprise songs of praise to Agni (fire), Indra (the heroic rain-god) and various other Vedic deities, philosophical hymns, myths, dialogues, ritual, cosmic riddles, etc. Although here no explicit theories about language and meaning can be expected, the authors of these texts do evince a sharp awareness of the potentialities of language and meaning. Especially, they attribute great importance to speech and the faculty to formulate powerful hymns and prayers. *Vāc*, speech or language is frequently referred to, and in one hymn (*Ṛgveda* 10.125) Speech (speaking in the first person) reveals herself as the Queen, carrying the deities and bestowing wealth to the performer of rituals; in greatness, it is said, she is beyond sky and earth, and it is she who gave birth to the father at the head of this universe. In the same hymn it is said: "It is by me [Speech] that someone eats food; (and) he who sees, who breathes, who hears what is said: without being aware of it, they depend on me". (*Ṛgveda* 10.125.4: *máyā só ánnam atti yó vipáśyati yáḥ prā́ṇiti yá īṁ śṛṇóty uktám, amantávo mā́ṁ tá úpa kṣiyanti*). Elsewhere, Speech is compared to a cow:

> May you be happy eating good fodder; and may we then be happy too. Eat always grass, o [cow] not to be killed, and drink pure water as you approach. The reddish (buffalo-)

cow lowed producing the waters; she, becoming one-footed, two-footed, four-footed, eight-footed, nine-footed, is thousand syllabled in the highest heaven.

sūyavasā́d bhágavatī hí bhūyā́ átho vayáṁ bhágavantaḥ syāma ¦
addhí tṛ́ṇam aghnye viśvadā́nīṁ píba śuddhám udakám ācárantī ¦¦
gaurī́r mimāya sálilāni tákṣaty ékapadī dvipádī sā́ cátuṣpadī ¦
aṣṭā́padī návapadī babhūvúṣī sahásrākṣarā paramé vyòman ¦¦ (ṚV 1.164.40–41)

The word *pada,* first of all meaning "foot", "stride" or "footstep", here refers to the quarters of a verse. Elsewhere, the foots or footsteps (*pada*) of the cow are its names. It has been suggested that the later common meaning "word" for *pada* developed from the Vedic metaphor of the footsteps which are to be traced by the poet in search for the cow Speech (Renou 1955:10).

If we can infer anything about 'meaning' from the Vedic hymns, it is that in the eyes of the authors and employers of these hymns 'meaning' is not restricted to a domain which is separate from reality. Meaning invades and creates reality. Speech and language are invested with creative power. When properly applied they produce tangible effects in reality. This is most evident in the hymns and stanzas which have the character of being charms or incantations. Such 'magical' hymns and stanzas occur in the Ṛgveda, but are most frequent in the Atharvaveda. However, even if a text is not clearly 'magical' in content, it may be employed in solemn or domestic rituals with a view to attain certain effects, usually to ward off evil, to promote well-being, or to overcome rivals. According to the *Ṛgvidhāna*, a later work which gives 'magical' applications to a great number of Ṛgvedic stanzas, the proper employment of, e.g., *Ṛgveda* 1.129—a philosophical hymn dealing with the first origins of creation—leads to the attainment of the state of Prajāpati, the Creator.

In addition, the structure of numerous Vedic passages shows that the authors were highly sensitive to the linguistic and semantic potentialities of their language. Of special interest are the relatively frequent instances where a Vedic author 'plays with' the etymological relationships between words (Gonda 1959:273–84): e.g. *Ṛgveda* 1.162.14: *yác ca papáu yác ca ghāsíṁ jaghā́sa* "what it has drunk and what fodder (*ghāsíṁ*) it has eaten (*jaghā́sa*)"; *Ṛgveda* 1.164.28: *mímāti māyúm páyate páyobhiḥ* "[the cow] makes a lowing sound (*mímāti māyúm*) and swells with milk (*páyate páyobhiḥ*)"; *Ṛgveda* 10.90.16: *yajñéna yajñám ayajanta devā́ḥ* "the gods sacrificed (*ayajanta*) for the sacrifice (*yajñám*) with a sacrifice (*yajñéna*)".

Sometimes, it seems that a construction suggests a certain etymological analysis of a crucial but difficult word (Gonda 1959:375–76), e.g. *Ṛgveda* 8.100.12: *sákhe viṣṇo vítaraṁ ví kramasva* "O friend Viṣṇu, traverse far-

ther"; and Ṛgveda 4.3.7: *kathā́ mahé puṣṭimbharā́ya pūṣṇé*, which suggests a connection between the god's name Pūṣan and the verbal stem *puṣ* "to nourish; to be nourished, thrive". A more explicit application of the device of etymologizing explanation, which became extremely popular in the Brāhmaṇa-texts, is found in the *Atharvaveda* (3.13.1–4) where four synonyms meaning 'water' are explained, by associating the names with similar verbal forms which express an action which is (mythologically) connected with water. In the first verse, for instance, it is said: "Because at that time, when the (cloud-) serpent was slain [by Indra], you roared (*á-nadatā*) while streaming forth collectively, therefore you are rivers (*nadyàḥ*) by name" (*yád adáḥ saṁprayatī́r áhāv ánadatā haté ¦ tásmād ā́ nadyò nā́ma stha*).

3.2 The Brāhmaṇas and ancillary disciplines

As we have seen, the Vedic hymns provide to some extent their own indications for the interpretation of difficult words and passages. This, however, proved at an early date insufficient or unsatisfactory to those studying the hymns and employing them in the rituals. The texts which developed to explain the hymns and the rituals in which they are employed are the Brāhmaṇas. The Brāhmaṇas in the broadest sense comprise distinct sections at the end which are referred to as Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. The Āraṇyakas, according to the tradition to be studied in the forest or wilderness (*araṇya*), typically discuss more esoteric ritual matters, while the Upaniṣads contain spiritual teachings which are not necessarily connected with the ritual (or even have an anti-ritualistic flavour). (That the situation is somewhat different in the so-called Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, in which the stanzas and formulas are interspersed with explanatory or Brāhmaṇa-portions, need not deter us here.) In later times, the Brāhmaṇas came to be considered to be part of the Vedas, and to be as sacred as the hymns and formulas on which they commented. The name *brā́hmaṇa* itself illustrates the great importance attributed to language and speech in these texts: it can be analysed as "belonging to the *bráhman*", where the word *bráhman*, has its more original meaning "sacred and powerful formulation" or "power to formulate" (cf. Renou 1955:12: "le pouvoir formulateur").

The Brāhmaṇa-authors, commenting on the hymns (or *bráhman*s) and the rituals in which they are recited, employed certain devices or procedures to succeed in their aims, procedures which modern readers usually will not find very convincing. The explanations are systematically developed according

to certain methods and on the basis of certain presuppositions. The whole approach in the Brāhmaṇa-texts has been aptly characterized as 'pre-scientific science' ("vorwissenschaftliche Wissenschaft") by H. Oldenberg (1919). Many of his observations remain valid even if it is now no longer possible always to follow Oldenberg's views on what 'real science' is and how it is related to earlier 'pre-scientific' stages of development (e.g. Oldenberg 1919: 6–7).

One of the procedures employed in these Brāhmaṇa-texts to elucidate the obscure parts of the ritual is the etymologizing explanation of words and names (Gonda 1959:368–79; 1975:377–78; Oldenberg 1919:118–19), an early example of which we have seen in the *Atharvaveda* (see above). In the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, for instance, in a passage which discusses the creation of the world by Prajāpati, the Creator, it is said (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.3.6): *tád yád asṛjyatā́kṣarat* ¦ *tád yád ákṣarat tásmād akṣáram* "now that which was created was flowing; and in as much as it was flowing (*á-kṣarat*), it was a syllable (*akṣára*)". Such 'etymologies' are of course untranslatable, although they can be imitated in a different language, as Minard did in French: "Parce qu'elle *o-scilla*, elle est (dite) *sylla-be*" (Minard 1949:152 §420 note).

In another passage a *rukmá* "golden ornament" used in a Vedic ritual is identified with the sun, and this identification is further supported with an etymologizing explanation (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 7.4.1.10): *asáu vā́ ādityá eṣá rukmá eṣá hìmāḥ sárvāḥ prajā́ atirócate rocó ha vái tám̐ rukmá íty ā́cakṣate paróкṣam̐ parókṣakāmā hí devā́[ḥ]* "This golden ornament (*rukmá*), verily, is yonder Āditya (the sun); for it shines over all people; being *rocá* "radiant" it is called *rukmá* "golden ornament" cryptically; for the gods love the cryptic". From the frequent expression that "the gods love the cryptic" (some places are enumerated by Gonda 1975:378, n. 69), it can be inferred that it was preferred that words and utterances express their sacred and potent content in an indirect and veiled way.

The preceding example illustrates not only the etymologizing explanation, but also another important device for the Brāhmaṇa-authors, namely identification (Oldenberg 1919:110–23; Gonda 1975:372–74). Identifications occur already in the Ṛgveda, for instance in the so-called Puruṣa-sūkta, *Ṛgveda* 1.10.90. In this hymn, the parts of the cosmic primeval Man are identified with the four Classes of people: the head of the cosmic Man is the priestly class, the arms the warrior class, the thighs the mercantile class, and the feet the servants. In the Brāhmaṇa-texts such identifications are extremely fre-

quent. Often, the identifications are variable: If A is identified with B at one place it may be identified with C at another place. Different identifications are even juxtaposed. There are, however, also a few 'constant' identifications which occur again and again, e.g. "Viṣṇu is the sacrifice"; "Prajāpati is the year"; "Bṛhaspati is Brahman"; "the consecrated sacrificer (*dīkṣita*) is an embryo (*garbha*) and will be (re-) born at the end of the sacrifice", "the oblation is the consecrated sacrificer" etc.

From a more detailed study of the Brāhmaṇa-texts one can infer that an identification such as A = B is short for "there exists a *bandhu* between A and B" (Oldenberg 1919:4 n. 2; 117; Gonda 1965; Oguibenine 1983). The *bandhu*, literally "connection" or "relationship", is the connection an element (object or act) in a ritual performance has with a microcosmic or macrocosmic element . It is, so to say, the 'deeper sense' of this ritual object or act. The connection, however, is considered to be very real, so that it can be said that the sacrificer and the oblation, for instance, although they are not identical, are more intimately connected than through just a symbolic relation.

An example is the special vessel used in the Pravargya-ceremony, which is frequently equated with "the head of the (divine, personified) sacrifice". Therefore, it can be said (*Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka* 5.1.7): "If one places the Pravargya vessel on the fire, then one puts back the head of the sacrifice" *yát pravargyàṁ pravṛṇákti ¦ yajñásyaivá tác chíraḥ práti dadhāti*. In other words, the 'deeper sense' of placing the Pravargya-vessel on the fire is that the sacrifice (or the deity who is the personified sacrifice) is made complete with a vital part, namely its 'head'.

The establishment of identities need not stop with one identification. Commenting on the act of piling coals around the vessel which is to be heated in the Pravargya-ceremony, the Brāhmaṇa says:

> The Pravargya-vessel is actually the head of the sacrifice. Indeed, yonder Āditya (the sun) is the Pravargya. The Maruts are its rays… He piles yonder Āditya (the sun) with rays. Hence in yonder world yonder Āditya (the sun) is surrounded with rays. Hence the king is surrounded with people. Hence the leader of a community is surrounded by his men.
> *śíro vā́ etád yajñásya ¦ yát pravargyàḥ ¦ asáu khálu vā́ ādityáḥ pravargyàḥ ¦ tásya marúto raśmáyaḥ ¦ … ¦ amúm evā́dityáṁ raśmíbhiḥ páry ūhati ¦ tásmād asā́v ādityò 'múṣmin loké raśmíbhiḥ páryūḍhaḥ ¦ tásmād rā́jā viśā́ páryūḍhaḥ ¦ tásmād grāmaṇī́ḥ sajātáiḥ páryūḍhaḥ ¦* (*Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka* 5.4.8–9)

Here the vessel is first identified as 'the head of the sacrifice', and next with the sun. The coals which are piled around the vessel are identified with the Maruts—a certain class of deities—and these are again identified with the

rays of the sun. This way, the act of piling coals around the vessel becomes equivalent to providing the sun with rays. This, in turn, is equated with placing people around a king and with surrounding a leader of a community with his men.

An even more complicated network of identifications and 'deeper meanings' forms the background of a subsequent passage (*Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka* 5.10.1–2), in which Prajāpati, the creator-god, elsewhere often identified with the sun, is identified with a cow whose 'bright milk' is milked by the gods. If this 'bright milk' is 'differentiated' it becomes a set of specific 'utterances' which are employed in the Pravargya-ceremony, namely the Śukriya-sāmans (sāmans are sacred melodies or songs). These Śukriya-sāmans give further rise to the so-called Śukra-yajus-formulas (yajus-formulas are the prose formulas which usually express prayers etc. and which accompany the ritual acts). The undifferentiated 'bright milk' which was milked from Prajāpati thus turns out to have been a stream of undifferentiated 'language and melodies', and Prajāpati or the cow turns out to be a repository of sacred knowledge. Although the usual identification of Prajāpati with the sun has receded into the background, it is still reflected in the 'bright stream' which issues from him. At the end the complex imagery is connected with two concrete objects which are employed in the Pravargya-ceremony, namely cow's milk and goat's milk.

A closely related device employed by the Brāhmaṇa-authors to explain the ritual and the recited stanzas etc. is that something is not directly explained by identifying it with another entity, but that it is said to have different *tanū́s* "bodies" or "characters (e.g. a favourable and an unfavourable character) (Oldenberg 1919:99–102). Similarly, it is frequently said that an entity or deity, Indra or Agni for instance, have different *rūpá*-s, "forms" or "manifestations". The bull is said to be a *rūpá* of Indra. Apart from its visible *rūpá* (namely, fire), Agni has an invisible form: the pieces of wood to light the fire (Oldenberg 1919:107–108).

One of the ways in which the term *rūpá* is used in these texts is of special interest: it is often juxtaposed to the term *nā́man* "name". According to a passage in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (11.2.3.3), Brahman entered this world with *rūpá* and *nā́man,* form and name, through which each thing is known: this world extends as far as form and name extend (*etā́vad vā́ idaṁ yā́vad rūpáṁ caiva nā́ma ca*, *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 11.2.3.3).

The relation between *nā́man* and *rūpá* is illustrated in the following passage. Prajāpati, the Creator, says to his son (*viz.* Agni or Fire):

"You are Rudra". When he made this name (*nā́man*) for him, Agni assumed that form (*rūpá*). Rudra, verily, is Agni. Because he cried, therefore he is Rudra. He said: "I am greater than that, give me a name".
rudrò 'sī́ti ¦ tád yád asya tan nāmā́karod agnís tád rūpám abhavad agnír vái rudró yád árodīt tásmād rudráḥ sò 'bravīj jyā́yān vā́ áto 'smi dhehy èva me nā́méti (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.3.10)

Next Prajāpati gives him name (*nā́man*) after name, with each of which different forms (*rūpá*) of Agni correspond.

Usually, a name is treated as something which points to but also evokes certain potencies. Sometimes, a distinction is made between the name common among the gods and the name among men (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.4.4; Gonda 1975:363). A high regard for names of deities and sacred entities is already most clearly reflected in the hymns (cf. above, and Gonda 1975:231). By knowing someone's name one acquires a certain power over him (be he/she divine or human) (cf. Oldenberg 1919:103).

The Upaniṣads, however, also contain a passage in which the name is presented as something very unsatisfactory in comparison with the 'truth'; 'a mere name' is contrasted with the material substance of an object which is the 'reality': In *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.1.2–6, Śvetaketu, who has studied the Vedas for many years, is asked by his father to whom he has returned, whether he has learned "that identification whereby what has not been heard of becomes heard of, what has not been thought of, becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes understood?" (*tam ādeśam … yenāśrutaṁ śrutaṁ bhavaty amataṁ matam avijñātaṁ vijñātam iti*). After Śvetaketu's negative answer, the father explains:

Just as, my dear, by one lump of clay everything made of clay may be known—the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just "clay"—
… so, my dear, is that identification.
yathā somyaikena mṛtpiṇḍena sarvaṁ mṛnmayaṁ vijñātaṁ syāt ¦ vācārambhaṇaṁ vikāro nāmadheyaṁ, mṛttikety eva satyam ¦ … evaṁ somya sa ādeśo bhavati ¦ (*Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 6.4.4–6)

Later developments in Indian philosophy, especially Sāṁkhya and Vedānta, are foreshadowed here: the directly perceived multitude of things with which we deal in daily life is unreal, what is real is an undivided underlying reality called Prakṛti in Sāṁkhya and Brahman in Vedānta; the things which we nevertheless all seem to perceive exist 'in name only': they are an illusion created and maintained partly or wholly by language.

What applies to all explanations offered by the Brāhmaṇa-authors is that the validity of alternative explanations is usually admitted. This relativizes,

of course, the value of each single explanation considerably. From one point of view one explanation may be valid, while at the same time from another point of view quite a different explanation may be equally valid. The valid viewpoints were themselves categorized at an early date. An important distinction which is well established from the earliest times is the one between explanations which are *adhyātmam* "applying to the person" and those which are *adhidaivatam* "applying to the deities and cosmos". A third sphere is sometimes mentioned for explanations which apply to the ritual (*adhiyajñam*). (Oldenberg 1919:57–58)

It is perhaps the fundamental lack of interest for the observable and the acceptance of numerous often hardly compatible explanations which were most disappointing to Western scholars when they started to study these texts in the idle hope to find objectively defensible explanations of the one and single meaning of a given ritual or linguistic expression (cf. Max Müller, speaking of these texts as "a literature which for pedantry and down-right absurdity can hardly be matched anywhere… . These works deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the raving of mad men …"; quoted after Thite 1975:2–6).

The acceptability of alternative explanations demonstrated in these early texts was one of the reasons which led Staal to assume that the ritual has no 'own meaning', hence, is 'meaningless'. According to Staal (1989:135), "The meaninglessness of ritual explains the variety of meanings attached to it. It could not be otherwise". Staal goes one step further and formulates the hypothesis that it is not only ritual behavior to which various meanings are attached that is meaningless in itself: in linguistic behavior, too, meaningless sound patterns (to some extent comparable to bird songs) precede the attribution of meaning to speech sounds in the course of human evolution (e.g. Staal 1989:266).

Staal's hypothesis may be controversial and probably untenable in the terms in which he put it (cf. Bodewitz 1990:7–9; Houben 1991:8–9; Smith 1991; Witzel 1992, cf. Staal's reaction to some of the criticism in Staal 1993), one of its merits is that it draws attention to much neglected biological-evolutionary aspects of ritual and linguistic behavior. Moreover, in a negative way it brings the creative side of the Brahmanical 'speculative semantics' into sharp relief (Staal, referring to Strenski 1991, speaks of "meaning madness"). The products of the authors of the Brāhmaṇas can be seen as extreme examples of the inventiveness of those in search of meaning in what is apparently or in fact meaningless. This may be illustrated with an example

taken from the Upaniṣads, which continue the Brāhmaṇas in several respects, except that instead of ritual they take as their main starting point more general and philosophical subjects such as man and his place in and relation with the universe.

According to *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 5.2, the gods, the men and the demons dwelt with their father Prajāpati as students of sacred knowledge. Asking for instruction, Prajāpati said one syllable, namely *da*, to each of the three groups of beings. The gods understood *da* as *dāmyata* "restrain yourselves", the men understood *da* as *datta* "give", and the demons understood it as *dayadhvam* "be compassionate". This same thing, according to the end of the passage, is repeated by the 'divine voice' in the form of thunder: *da da da iti ¦ dāmyata, datta, dayadhvam iti ¦ tad etat trayaṁ śikṣed, damaṁ dānaṁ dayām iti* "Da-da-da. *Dāmyata* "restrain yourselves", *datta* "give", *dayadhvam* "be compassionate". These three one should practice: self-restraint, liberality, compassion".

This 'interpretation' of the sound of thunder is very similar to the etymological explanations of so many words and expressions (collections of speech sounds) in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, except that the sounds explained are here not speech sounds but the sounds of nature.

Several of the starting points in the Brāhmaṇas are elaborated in different ancillary branches of learning. Traditionally, there are six of such ancillaries to the Vedic texts: Śikṣā (phonetics), Kalpa (ritual), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Chandas (metrics and prosody), and Jyotiṣa (astrology). In addition, there are the Prātiśākhyas, texts discussing phonetic knowledge which relates specifically to the language/dialect of one of the Vedic schools (e.g. Ṛgveda, Taittirīya Yajurveda). The disciplines most closely concerned with semantics are Vyākaraṇa and Nirukta.

Besides, the principles of argumentation which were implicit in the discussions in the Brāhmaṇas were developed into separate disciplines, especially rhetoric, logic and exegesis. In later times these disciplines developed into the different 'systems of philosophy'. In the classical period of Indian Philosophy, starting in ca. the second half of the first millennium CE, six orthodox systems of philosophy are generally recognized, both by early Indian doxographers and by modern scholars (cf. Frauwallner 1953:11–29). The six systems, whose 'orthodoxy' consists in their acceptance of the Veda as an authoritative text, are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Yoga, Sāṁkhya, Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta. The systems as we know them have been deeply influenced by non- or anti-Vedic philosophies in the circles of the Buddhists and Jainas. Most

important from the point of view of semantics are Mīmāṁsā and Nyāya. While some systems, such as Yoga and Sāṁkhya, are only distantly connected with the Veda as a body of authoritative texts, the Mīmāṁsā is most intensively concerned with the exegesis and defence of the Vedic texts.

4. Nirukta: "etymology" or "explanation of word meaning through derivation"

Nirukta (*nir-ukta* "explained" from *nir-vac* "to express clearly", "to explain") is the branch of learning dealing with the *nirvacana* or *nirukti* "derivation and semantic explanation" of words. Methodically, it can be considered a direct continuation of the etymologizing explanations of words in the Brāhmaṇas. The text which has become authoritative for this branch of learning, and in fact practically synonymous with it, is Yāska's *Nirukta*. The date of Yāska, and especially his relation to Pāṇini, has since long been a controversial point (Cardona 1976:270–73).

Whatever the precise chronological relation between Pāṇini and Yāska, the character and structure of their works is clearly divergent, even though there is also some overlap (Bronkhorst 1981). In general, the methodology in Yāska's *Nirukta* appears as "primitive when compared with that of Pāṇini" (Scharfe 1977:118). Moreover, the *Nirukta* remains very closely connected with the Vedas, while Pāṇini discusses both the Vedic language and the *bhāṣā,* i.e., the language spoken by the well-educated. The connection of the *Nirukta* with the Vedic texts (including the Brāhmaṇas) is so close that the Brāhmaṇas sometimes provide the narrative background for an etymology provided in the *Nirukta* (Gonda 1975:378). Yāska's work can in this light be considered to be, if not chronologically, at least culturally and intellectually closer to the Vedic Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas than Pāṇini.

The body of Yāska's work is a commentary on (most of) the words of the *Nighaṇṭu*, an anonymous glossary of Vedic words, which is "the earliest known systematic work clearly dividing the words of the Sanskrit language into the groups of nouns, verbs and particles" (Palsule 1961: 6). (The word *nighaṇṭu* is of doubtful derivation, but is generally used to refer to a glossary or vocabulary.) The *Nighaṇṭu* on which Yāska comments consists of five chapters. The first three chapters mainly deal with synonyms, the fourth with homonyms, the fifth with names of deities. What is of most interest in the present context, however, is the comparatively elaborate introduction to the commentary proper in Chapter 1 and part of Chapter 2 (*Nirukta* 1–2.4). In

this section Yāska discusses the aims and methods of the Nirukta as a branch of learning and refers to different teachers and contemporary disputes concerning language and meaning.

In Chapter 1 the author discusses the *catvāri padajātāni* "four classes of words": *nāman* "noun", *ākhyāta* "verb", *upasarga* "preverb", and *nipāta* "particle". For the first two a definition is given: in the verb *bhāva* "being, becoming" is predominant, while the noun has *sattva* "existing thing" as its main notion. It is to be noted that *bhāva* and *sattva* are derived from semantically closely related verbs, viz. *bhū* "to be, become" and *as* "to be". The definition of the first two wordclasses is further refined as follows:

> But where both have *bhāva* "being, becoming" as the main thing, the *bhāva* which has a sequence is denoted by a verb, e.g. "he goes", "he cooks". [But the *bhāva*] which is an existing thing embodying [a *bhāva*] from the beginning to the end [is denoted] by nouns expressing an existing thing, e.g. "going", "cooking". [The pronoun] *adas* "that" is a reference to existing things, e.g. cow, horse, man, elephant. [The verb] *bhavati* "it is, becomes" [is a reference to] a *bhāva* "being, becoming", e.g. he is laying, he goes, he stands.
> *tad yatrobhe bhāvapradhāne bhavataḥ pūrvāparībhūtaṁ bhāvam ākhyātenācaṣṭe ¦ vrajati pacatīti ¦ upakramaprabhṛtyapavargaparyantaṁ mūrtaṁ sattvabhūtaṁ sattvanāmabhiḥ ¦ vrajyā paktir iti ¦ ada iti sattvānām upadeśaḥ ¦ gaur aśvaḥ puruṣo hastīti ¦ bhavatīti bhāvasya ¦ āste śete vrajati tiṣṭhatīti ¦* (*Nirukta* 1.1)

In contrast with this definition of verbs and nouns according to semantic criteria, we will see that Pāṇini defined them according to strictly formal criteria (below, p. 91). After this definition, Yāska mentions an alternative view concerning word classes. It is attributed to Audumbarāyaṇa, about whom no further information is available. It is difficult to reconstruct Audumbarāyaṇa's view from the few indications in this passage of the Nirukta (*Nirukta* 1.1–2), but the implication of his view is clearly stated: the fourfold division of words does not hold. In two verses in the work of the later grammarian Bhartṛhari (*Vākyapadīya* 2.344–5), Audumbarāyaṇa is referred to as propounding the theory that the sentence or utterance is the primary and indivisible unit of language (cf. Brough 1952; Houben 1995b:44, 46). That such a theory implies that there cannot be a strict division into separate word classes is explained by Bhartṛhari in the preceding verse (*Vākyapadīya* 2.343).

Yāska apparently does not agree with Audumbarāyaṇa since he does accept a division of words into four classes. He proceeds to give a subdivision of *bhāva* "being, becoming", the meaning of verbs, allegedly going back to Vārṣyāyaṇi. In fact, this subdivision has the character of an ontological doctrine dealing with reality as "being and becoming": there are six transfor-

mations (*vikāras*) of *bhāva*, viz. *jāyate* "to be born", *asti* "to exist", *vipariṇamate* "it transforms itself", *vardhate* "it grows", *apakṣīyate* "it is decaying", *vinaśyati* "it is detroyed". Next, each subdivision is defined, for instance: " 'to be born' refers to the beginning of the first 'being/becoming'; it does not refer to the later being/becoming, nor does it deny it;" " 'to exist' [refers to] the maintenance of an existent thing which has come into existence;" etc.). All other 'transformations of being/becoming' are claimed to be transformations of these six basic transformations.

After the two digressions on the theories of Audumbarāyaṇa and Vārṣyāyaṇi, Yāska discusses the two remaining word classes, preverbs and particles, of which he gives no definitions but only subdivisions and illustrative enumerations (*Nirukta* 1.3–11). With regard to preverbs, he refers to the two views of Śākaṭāyana and Gārgya: According to the former, preverbs do not have a meaning of their own, but they highlight a secondary relation with the object of the noun or verb. According to the latter, preverbs do have various meanings. Their meaning implies a modification in the meaning of noun and verb.

The next important issue discussed in the *Nirukta* is the question wether all nouns are derived from a verbal stem, or whether there are some nouns which cannot be so derived. The *Nirukta* records that the first view was held by the grammarian Śākaṭāyana, and the second view by Gārgya and some of the grammarians. The first view is also adopted in the *Nirukta*. Several objections against the first view are mentioned and next refuted.

There is also an objection (attributed to Kautsa) that there is no point in searching the meaning of Vedic verses, as they are meaningless, or have self-contradictory or obscure meanings. They are to be employed in ritual as prescribed in the sacred texts, and their meaning is irrelevant. This is not accepted by Yāska, who holds that the words in the Vedic verses are in principle the same as those employed in daily usage (*Nirukta* 1.15–6).

On the methodology of the Nirukta as a discipline, Yāska has the following to say:

> With reference to this, the words, the accent and the grammatical form of which are regular and accompanied by a radical modification which gives a hint, should be derived in the ordinary manner. But if the meaning is not perspicuous, and if there is no radical modification which gives a hint, one should investigate [the word to be explained], taking one's stand on the meaning, according to a similarity (of a verbal root with a suitable meaning) to the derived form (i.e., to the word to be explained). Even if no similar [verbal root] is found, one should explain [the word] according to a similarity in syllable or phoneme. But never should one abstain from explaining [by deriving it from some root]. One should not be attached to the grammatical form [too much], for the derived forms (i.e., the words to be explained) are full of uncertainties.

tad yeṣu padeṣu svarasaṁskārau samarthau prādeśikena vikāreṇānvitau syātāṁ tathā tāni nirbrūyāt ¦ athānanvite 'rthe 'prādeśike vikāre 'rthanityaḥ parīkṣeta ¦ kena cid vṛttisāmānyena ¦ avidyamāne sāmānye 'py akṣaravarṇasāmānyān nirbrūyāt ¦ na tv eva na nirbrūyāt ¦ na saṁskāram ādriyeta ¦ viśayavatyo hi vṛttayo bhavanti ¦
(*Nirukta* 2.1)

Commenting on the phrase "But never should one abstain from explaining", Rajavade (1939:297) rightly, though with some exaggeration, said: " 'one *must* derive a word' is a terrible command which has led to all kinds of extravagant derivations".

The derivations and attempts at derivations which follow after Yāska's introductory remarks cannot be reviewed at this place, but it may suffice to state that they all imply the association of a term to be explained with one or more verbal roots. There is not the slightest indication that Yāska or his early commentators ever considered their derivations to reflect an historical development in the language, something which was sometimes forgotten by modern students and critics of the *Nirukta* (cf. Bronkhorst 1981a).

Of interest in the light of later semantic thought is a passage in which Yāska discusses particles which indicate comparison (such as *iva* "as it were"). In this passage (*Nirukta* 3.13) he quotes a definition of a comparison (*upamā*) by Gārgya: "something which is not that, but similar to it" (*yad atat tat-sadṛśam*). The theory of comparisons will be addressed and elaborated in other disciplines, such as Mīmāṁsā and grammar, but especially in poetics.

Even though numerous derivations offered by Yāska are unacceptable in the light of modern linguistic investigations, the *Nirukta* is an important document recording a tradition of efforts at acceptable interpretations of difficult words, and in several cases modern scholars have not been able to improve on the early achievements (cf. Thieme 1994). In present-day philological attempts to establish the meaning of problematic Vedic words even unacceptable etymologies may prove (indirectly) helpful. Yāska's views on the purpose and methods of explaining words may be objectionable, his remarks show at least that there was systematic and thorough reflection on these matters. His references shed welcome, though ever too little, light on the theories of different thinkers about whom we otherwise know next to nothing.

5. The exegetic guidelines of early Mīmāṁsā

The Mīmāṁsakas (followers and practitioners of Mīmāṁsā) are the ritualists and the exegetes among the Brahmins. The central notion in Mīmāṁsā is not *mokṣa* "liberation", as in most other systems, but rather *dharma* "the collec-

tion of ritual, religious and moral duties". Accepting only the Veda as a reliable guide for the *dharma*, the Mīmāṁsakas are confronted with the formidable task of deriving coherent instructions on practical (mainly ritual) matters from this ancient and far from homogeneous body of texts.

The term *mīmāṁsā* means "reflection, investigation" and is derived from the intensive stem of the verbal stem *man* "to think". The object of investigation is correct action in accordance with *dharma* and especially in accordance with the Vedic texts. Reflections and considerations regarding the Vedic passages and the best way to perform certain ritual acts occur already in the Brāhmaṇas, where also the term *mīmāṁsā* is occasionally used. A systematic investigation of problems of text-interpretation and ritual, however, takes place in the *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, which is attributed to Jaimini (about whose life we know, as usual for acient Indian authors, practically nothing). Together with the Śrauta-Sūtras which probably originated in approximately the same period (ca. 3rd-6th century BCE), the Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra belongs to the earliest available examples of the peculiar *sūtra*-style which became the preferred style for basic treatises in the different disciplines and systems of philosophy (e.g the *Yoga-Sūtra*, Pāṇini's *Vyākaraṇa-Sūtra* or *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the relatively late *Sāṁkhya-Sūtra* etc.; Sūtra is used for the text, sūtras for the individual aforisms of which it consists).

The *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* as it is now available consists of about 2700 sūtras. A voluminous commentary (*bhāṣya*) attributed to Śabara was written in about the 4th or 5th century CE, i.e. some 6 to 10 centuries after the sūtras on which it comments. We do not know whether all sūtras go back to the earliest period. Both Jaimini's and Śabara's work are rich in semantic and linguistic insights, but these are scattered over the sūtras and commentaries and nowhere discused systematically. The *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* in Śabara's Bhāṣya is divided into 12 books (*adhyāyas*), each subdivided into at least 4 sections (*pādas*). The first book discusses among other things the following.

After the initial sūtra which announces that the subject of the *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* is the investigation of *dharma*, the first section of the first book defines this notion as follows: "*dharma* is that purpose which is indicated by Vedic injunctions" (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.1.2: *codanā-lakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmaḥ*). Next it is explained that only the Vedic texts can give reliable knowledge about *dharma*. The reliability of the Veda is defended by proving that there is an eternal relation between word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*). In the commentary the nature of the word is further discussed, and it is concluded that it should be regarded as a collection of phonemes (*varṇa-samudāya*). The sūtras

and their commentary go on to argue that words are eternal. The Mīmāṁsā rejects the arguments of those holding that the word is non-eternal and created, and defends that it is eternal and merely manifested whenever a person pronounces it.

At this point, an objection is raised. When it is established that words are eternal, does that imply that the Vedic sentence also has a fixed and reliable meaning? After all, the Vedic injunctions take the form of sentences, not of single words. And in daily life it is seen that, even if words and their relation with meanings are considered eternal, the sentence as a conglomeration of words is created by human beings who may make mistakes. According to Jaimini's sūtra which should answer this objection, "the meaning of the sentence is based on 'that'" (… *arthasya tannimittatvāt*, *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.1.25). According to Śabara's explanation, the purport of this sūtra is that the sentence meaning is based on the meaning of the words (*tat-* "that" in the sūtra interpreted as "meaning of the words").

This is also the interpretation of an important later Mīmāṁsā-philosopher, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (7th century CE), who founded a sub-school of Mīmāṁsā. However, a Mīmāṁsā-philosopher of about the same period, Prabhākara (likewise the founder of a sub-school of Mīmāṁsā), interpreted Jaimini's sūtra in a different way, so that it fitted his theory of the sentence meaning: according to Prabhākara, the words do not express a meaning of their own, independent from their context in the sentence, but express a meaning which is from the beginning related to the meanings of other words in the sentence. The controversy between these two theories of the sentence meaning propounded by groups of Mīmāṁsā-thinkers who base themselves on the same sūtras of Jaimini will be of considerable importance in discussions of Sanskrit philosophers both inside and outside the Mīmāṁsā-school.

Finally, it is argued that the Vedic sentences do not have any (divine or human) author. The argument—which, incidentally, did not convince the Buddhists and Jainas, and which was also unsatisfactory to other defenders of the Veda, e.g. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophers—is that these sentences deal with a subject, viz. *dharma*, which is beyond the reach of any individual's sensory perception. If no-one can perceive the *dharma*, no-one can compose reliable sentences about it. Since the Vedic statements dealing with *dharma* cannot be the work of an individual, they must be authorless. Being authorless, they are absolutely reliable since no-one's weakness can interfere.

All this is discussed in the first section—32 sūtras with commentary—which is called *tarkapāda* "section of argumentation" and is generally

speaking the most 'philosophical' one. It contains arguments and reactions to the ideas of other thinkers and systems of thought, for instance the Vaiśeṣikas who understand *śabda* and *artha* in a different way and deny that there is an eternal relation between them. In the development of Mīmāṁsā from a system of exegesis to one of the major systems of philosophy, this introductory section was increasingly emphasized. The Mīmāṁsaka Kumārila wrote an elaborate commentary, viz. the Ślokavārttika in 3348 verses, on this section alone.

In the remaining three sections of the first book, Jaimini and Śabara adopt some basic distinctions within the Vedic literature: an indispensible step in their project of developing a system of interpretation for this ocean of traditional texts. Given their interest in the ritual, it need not be a surprise that for them the main portions of the texts are the *vidhi*s "injunctions". A simple example of a *vidhi* is "the one who desires heaven should sacrifice" (*svarga-kāmo yajeta*). In its broadest sense, the *vidhi* includes negative injunctions or *pratiṣedha*s "prohibitions".

The *vidhi*-portions (injunctions, positive and negative) are to be distinguished sharply from the *arthavāda*s "recommendations", which play only a secondary role, as they are illustrative and supportive of the "injunctions". For instance, in a passage in the *Taittirīya-Saṁhitā* (belonging to the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda) it is said: "Vāyu is the swiftest of the gods" (*vāyúr vaí kṣépiṣṭhā devátā, Taittirīya-Saṁhitā* 2.1.1). This sentence does not seem to give any indication about "what should be done". So what is its purpose? Accepting that it serves no purpose at all would amount to admitting that the Veda contains useless sentences. However, if the context of the sentence is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that it is a recommendation for the injunction in a preceding sentence: "The one who is desirous of prosperity should sacrifice a white (goat) dedicated to Vāyu (the Wind); Vāyu is the swiftest of the gods; … he (Vāyu) leads him (the sacrificer) to prosperity" (*vāyavyàṁ śvetám ā́ labheta bhū́tikāmo; vāyúr vaí kṣépiṣṭhā devátā; … sá evaínaṁ bhū́tiṁ gamayati, Taittirīya-Saṁhitā* 2.1.1).

Again, the *arthavāda* may be positive (recommending a certain ritual or offering for a certain purpose), or it may be negative (pointing out a bad consequence of the omission or wrong performance of a ritual). The *arthavāda* may consist of a short sentence as in the example above, or it may develop into a short narrative which illustrates the origin, importance, or effects of a ritual.

The crucial distinction between *vidhi* "injunction" and *arthavāda* "recommendation" primarily concerns the prose-sections of the Brāhmaṇa-texts.

A major part of the traditional texts of the Veda consists of verses and formulas collected in the Ṛgveda- and the other Saṁhitās. These are not easily categorized under either of the two headings of injunction and recommendation. Does that mean they are meaningless? What exactly is the purpose of these verses and formulas, these *mantra*s? According to some, the mere recitation of the *mantra*s suffices to make the ritual successful (the position is reminiscent to that of Kautsa mentioned in the *Nirukta,* see above, Section 4). Jaimini, however, does not agree with this and holds that also the meaning of the *mantra*s is of importance. They may either have an additional injunctive value or they are to be regarded as recommendations (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.2.40–53). In practice Śabara looks upon them as a third main division in the Veda, apart from the *vidhi* and *arthavāda*. The main distinctive aim of a *mantra* is said to be to highlight at the time of its performance a certain ritual act which is already prescribed by the *vidhi*, e.g. the *mantra* "I am cutting the *barhiḥ*-grass for seating the gods" (*barhir devasadanaṁ dāmi*) which is to be pronounced when cutting the *barhiḥ*-grass to be strewed as a seat for the deities (cf. Śabara on *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.4.1).

In this context Jaimini pronounces a principle which is of considerable importance in Mīmāṁsā as a system of exegesis: the meaning of the Vedic words and sentences should be accepted as basically identical with the meaning of words in daily language (i.e. the words of the well-educated elite): "But there is no difference in the meaning of sentences [in the Veda and in daily language]" (*aviśiṣṭas tu vākyārthaḥ*, *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.2.40). Later on it is said that the meaning of words in the Veda and in daily life must be the same, as otherwise it could not be maintained that the Veda is centered around injunctions. For injunctions are to be understood by those for whom they are intended: "As there are injunctions with regard to actions [to be performed by people], there is a single meaning [for words in the Veda and those in daily language], for there is no division" (*prayogacodanābhāvād arthaikatvam avibhāgāt*, *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.3.30).

Another subject discussed is the relation between (a) the prescription of the Vedic texts; (b) the prescriptions of other traditional texts; and (c) traditional customs which are nowhere prescribed. The general rule is that (a) is stronger than (b), which, in turn, is stronger than (c). However, when traditional customs are adhered to by those who otherwise follow the Vedas, it may be assumed that there did exist a now forgotten part of the Veda on which this custom is based. The acceptance of the argument of a lost part of the Veda created for later Mīmāṁsā-thinkers such as Kumārila the problem

that they had to distinguish between orthodox traditions without scriptural authority, and unorthodox (e.g. Buddhist) traditions which might also claim to follow a lost section of the Veda (Halbfass 1991:60).

Of considerable theoretical importance in the first book is finally the discussion about the question whether the meaning directly expressed by a word is the *ākṛti* or *vyakti* (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.3.30–5). The first term, which literally means "form" or "shape", may be translated in this context as "class" or "universal". The term *vyakti* is the concrete "manifestation" of a universal, and it may be translated as the "individual instance". After reviewing arguments for both the view that it is the *ākṛti* that is directly expressed, and the view that it is the *vyakti*, the Mīmāṁsakas adopt the first view. Only through the *ākṛti* "class" or "universal" which is directly expressed, may a word indicate a concrete individual instance. Thus, what is expressed directly by the word "cow", for instance, is "cowness", and only through this "cowness" is an individual cow indicated.

The second book starts with a discussion of the meaning of verbs. According to Jaimini, a verb (*ākhyāta*) is both *bhāvārtha* 'expressive of "bringing about"' and a *karma-śabda* "word for an action"; it expresses something which is not yet accomplished at the time of its utterance. (Incidentally, it may be observed that this definition would not apply to e.g. finite verbs in past and perfect tenses, but it does apply to injunctive verbs which are the focus of the Mīmāṁsakas' attention.) On the utterance of a noun (*nāman*), however, the form of something accomplished (*siddha*) is cognized (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 2.1.1–4). Parallel to this linguistic-semantic observation, Śabara argues for the acceptance of an ontological entity which is called *apūrva* "something which did not exist earlier"; it is a transcendental effect or potency, which is considered to be the direct result of a ritual. A distinction is made between primary and secondary verbs (and primary and secondary acts denoted by them). The primary verb and act have a direct bearing on the *apūrva*, the secondary verbs and acts produce some material result. The idea of this *apūrva* remains rather unclear in the sūtras (it occurs e.g. in *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 1.2.19, 3.4.12–3), but it is elaborated by Śabara. Later on it plays an important role in the work of Kumārila. In the work of Prabhākara it is much less important.

A crucial step in the interpretation of texts is to determine where one sentence or utterance stops and where another starts. Inevitably, the Mīmāṁsakas were confronted with this problem. In the case of the verses from the Ṛgveda, the metre provides an indication for the precise extent of

each verse or *mantra*. But in order to determine the extent of the prose-formulas of the Yajurveda (and other prose-passages), the Mīmāṁsā has to take recourse to special definitions. The definition of a sentence is given in *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 2.1.46: *arthaikatvād ekaṁ vākyaṁ sākāṅkṣaṁ ced vibhāge syāt*, which may be rendered as "On account of its serving a single purpose [a group of words] forms one single *vākya* "sentence", if, on separation, it turns out to show *ākāṅkṣā* "syntactic and semantic expectancy"". In other situations, one has to accept a syntactic split and hence distinct sentences: "When [expressions] are indifferent [to each other, i.e. without mutual *ākāṅkṣā* "semantic and syntactic expectancy"] there should be a division of sentences" (*sameṣu vākyabhedaḥ syāt*, *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 2.1.47).

The term *ākāṅkṣā* "expectancy" is used as a technical term to denote "semantic and syntactic expectancy". For instance, if the word "shut" is uttered, one expects to be informed on "what" it is that is to be shut (a door or a mouth, etc.); if the word "door" is uttered, one expects to be informed on what to do with it (open, close, lock, etc.). In such cases the Mīmāṁsā would say that one word (rather than the listener) "expects" or "has expectancy for" the other. If one says "shut the door", "shut" and "door" have mutual (semantic and syntactic) expectancy but the expression as a whole has no outward expectancy. Two complete statements, "shut the door" and "take some water" can be separated without there arising any expectancy to receive additional information. Hence they are two separate sentences.

The remaining books (3–12) introduce further notions and refinements and discuss various details of the Vedic texts and rituals. In the course of the discussions, several exegetic principles concerning the interpretation of words and sentences are pronounced. These principles, scattered over the numerous books (including the first two) and gradually revealed in the discussions, may be gathered under specific headings (as done, for instance, by Garge 1952:252–65; Devasthali 1959 and 1991).

For instance, once it is accepted that a word has an eternal relation with a meaning, how do we determine this meaning? As we have seen, a basic principle accepted in Mīmāṁsā is that one should first of all assume that the words in a sacred text have the same meaning as in current usage. Śabara enunciated this principle in the first sentence of his commentary, and Jaimini devoted a section of his Sūtra-text to it (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 6.1.44–50; see also 1.2.40, referred to above).

The meaning of a specific word can be determined more precisely with a simple test: "the [meaning] which arises if some [linguistic element] is

added, that is the meaning of that [linguistic element]" *yasya cāgame yad upajāyate sa tasyārtha iti gamyate* (Śabara on *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 4.1.15; the principle explicated by Śabara is hinted at in the sūtra). For instance:

> If it is said: "bring the horse", the bringing of a horse is understood. (If it is said:) "bring the cow", the bringing of a cow is understood. Here the (idea of a) horse disappears, and the (idea of a) cow arises. Hence one knows, "horse" is the meaning of the word horse, and of the word cow (the meaning is) "cow".
> *aśvam ānayety ukte 'śvānayanaṁ pratīyate ¦ gām ānayeti gavānayanam ¦ tatrāśvo 'paiti, gauś copajāyate ¦ tena jñāyate, aśvaśabdasyāśvo 'rtho, gośabdasya gaur iti ¦* (Śabara on *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 4.1.15).

If it is not possible to solve the problem of interpretation with this principle, there is the principle that the meaning which the well-educated understand from a word should be accepted as its true meaning. Next, for words which are not in common usage among the well-educated, one may have recourse to Vedic wordlists (Nigama), and to the ancillary disciplines of Nirukta "Explanation through derivation" and Vyākaraṇa "Grammar".

One of the other ways of looking at words is to consider their function in a sentence. An important distinction in this context is that between words which are *viśeṣaṇa* "qualifying" and those that are *viśeṣya* "to be qualified". For instance, in *śoṇo 'śvaḥ* "red horse", *śoṇaḥ* "red" is the qualifying word (*viśeṣaṇa*) and *aśvaḥ* "horse" the qualified (*viśeṣya*). The distinction also applies to the parts of a compound: in *rājapuruṣa* "king's servant", *rājan* "king" is the qualifying word, *puruṣa* "servant" the qualified. An exegetic rule based on the distinction *viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya* is that a prescribed act is always understood with regard to the qualified, not with regard to the qualifier (Śabara on *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 7.4.17, 8.1.34). For instance, if it is said: "the *rājapuruṣa* "king's servant" should be honoured", it is the servant who should be honoured, not the king, as the servant is *viśeṣya* "to be qualified", and the king the "qualifier" (*viśeṣaṇa*). Thus, if an act with regard to a cake called *aindra* "dedicated to Indra" (the word *aindra* being a derivative from *indra*) is prescribed without sufficient indications concerning the precise procedure, one may be in doubt which analogy should be followed, that of other offerings to Indra (usually consisting of curd and butter), or that of other offerings consisting of the same material (viz. grains). In favour of the former view one might submit that the deity is a more important factor in the context of the sacrifice than the material. However, the correct view according to Mīmāṁsā is that the analogy of the material should be followed since in this context the deity is only a *viśeṣaṇa* "qualifier" of the cake to be offered (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 8.1.32–4).

So far we have made a few observations on how Mīmāṁsā deals with words used in their main or direct sense. We have seen that several principles are followed in order to arrive at the direct sense of a word in case this is not obvious. Generally speaking, it is assumed that a word has one meaning, which should be in accordance with its direct meaning in daily life. Some of the problems in interpretation are solved by considering some words primary and others subordinate to them. Even so, the Mīmāṁsā has to recognize that in many cases a passage in the sacred texts does become problematic or even meaningless if all words are taken in their direct sense. Since it is absolutely out of the question to accept a Vedic passage as meaningless, the problem is solved by assuming a secondary or transferred meaning for one or more words in the passage.

To illustrate the problem, we may turn to the verbal, nominal and derivational endings. Mīmāṁsā reflected not only on the meaning of whole words and sentences in the sacred texts, but also on the meaning of these affixes. One of the problems in this connection is: when exactly is the meaning of an ending intended literally, and when not? For instance, in the injunction *paśum ālabheta* "let him sacrifice an animal", the number and gender of the ending in *paśum* qualify the animal to be sacrificed. Hence, a single, male animal is to be taken. Similarly, one might argue that in the injunction *darśapūrṇamāsābhyāṁ svargakāmo yajeta* "the one desirous of heaven should perform the new- and full-moon-sacrifice" the masculine ending of *svargakāmaḥ* is significant. Hence, only a man and no woman desirous of heaven would be entitled to perform these sacrifices. This, however, is not accepted by Jaimini and Śabara who argue that here the ending, though expressive of masculinity, does not preclude women. Masculinity of the one desiring heaven is not meant literally. Being used in a secondary sense (*lakṣaṇatvena*), the term *svargakāmaḥ* is indicative of any person desiring heaven. Women, therefore, are also fully entitled to perform these sacrifices (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 6.1.6–8). From other ritual prescriptions it follows that these sacrifices are to be performed by the man and his wife conjointly if they both desire to attain heaven (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 6.1.17–21).

While in this case the authorities of Mīmāṁsā argue on the basis of the context that a secondary meaning is to be accepted, they certainly prefer to stick to the literal meaning of an expression as much as possible. The terms used by the Mīmāṁsakas to distinguish these two meanings are the *mukhya-artha* "meaning of the face [of the word]" and the *gauṇa-artha* "secondary meaning". Instead of the latter, also the term *jaghanya-artha* "meaning of

the hinder part [of the word]'' is occasionally used. Since the relation between word and meaning is considered eternal, only one meaning can be the ''real'' meaning of a word, and this is the *mukhya-artha*. The function by which a word expresses its *mukhya-artha* is called *abhidhā* ''direct expression''. To accept secondary usage in the sacred texts is undesirable, though, as we have seen, not impossible. The term used for secondary usage (or, to be more precise, for the function through which a word expresses a secondary sense) is *lakṣaṇā*, ''indication'' from the verbal root *lakṣ* ''to indicate, mark, sign; perceive''. The acceptance of *lakṣaṇā* instead of the direct meaning should always be justified. A reason to accept it is that otherwise even more undesirable things would have to be accepted, such as (a) meaninglessness of a passage e.g. on account of a contradiction between the primary meanings of its words; (b) the assumption of something imperceptible (an explanation through perceptible realities is preferred); (c) a division of the sentence (see below). Moreover, it is not possible arbitrarily to assign a meaning to a word which does not convey its literal meaning: the meaning accepted as the secondary one should be somehow connected with the primary meaning. To mention only one example of those occurring in the discussions of Jaimini and Śabara: a word may be used to indicate the *attribute* of a thing instead of the thing itself. An illustration from daily life mentioned by Śabara is the expression *agnir māṇavakaḥ* ''the boy is fire'': it is not said that the boy is identical with fire, but that he has the same property as fire, viz. brightness. The secondary and primary meaning are connected through this attribute.

The purpose of the interpretive efforts of the Mīmāṁsaka is always to understand complete, meaningful sentences in sacred texts. In addition to the rules pertaining to words, there are those concerning the interpretation of the sentence. Most important in this respect are those giving guidance in the determination of the syntactic units: the principle of the syntactic unit, and the principle of syntactic split, which were both discussed above. To this may be added that the acceptance of an expression as a single unit is generally preferred. Only if a passage clearly consists of two groups of words each having their own purpose, is a syntactic split accepted. But if a group of words can be understood as a single sentence by assuming, for instance, a secondary meaning of one of the words, this is preferred to accepting a syntactic split even though the adoption of a secondary meaning is in itself not very desirable. Thus, there is a hierarchy of desirable and less desirable decisions in interpretation, and although the guiding principles are nowhere comprehensively and systematically expounded, they can be inferred from

the elaborate discussions in the 12 books of Mīmāṁsā. What they all aim at is making the sacred texts entirely 'meaningful' (mainly in terms of ritual acts to be performed), even in the numerous difficult passages they contain.

To conclude, it may be said that Mīmāṁsā offers a system of exegesis of the early Vedic texts—and especially the Brāhmaṇa-texts—which is intimately connected with the performance of Vedic ritual by the highest classes, especially the Brahmins. It should be noted that in their wish to derive information on 'what should be done' from (mainly) the Brāhmaṇa-texts, the Mīmāṁsakas use these texts for something for which they were not primarily meant. As we have seen above, they generally do not teach but *presuppose* a thorough familiarity with the rituals. Assuming that one already knows 'what should be done' the Brāhmaṇa-texts discuss the interpretations and implications of various acts and of the hymns recited at certain points in the rituals.

Moreover, the Brāhmaṇa-texts accept that different interpretations may be valid in distinct meaningful contexts. As pointed out earlier, these texts spell out the implications of the acts and hymns in the sphere of the cosmos, man, and ritual, and a single act or hymn may be interpreted in all these three contexts. For the Mīmāṁsakas, these interpretations are merely *arthavāda*s "recommendations", whereas what they are interested in are the injunctions. With regard to these, they try to establish a single, unequivocal meaning and the one and only best way to perform a ritual.

6. Grammar and semantics in the early Pāṇinian tradition

6.1 The role of meanings and semantics in Pāṇini's grammar (the Aṣṭādhyāyī)

Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, "at once the shortest and the fullest grammar in the world" (MacDonell 1927:xi), is not a paradigmatic grammar, like the classical European grammars of Latin and Greek, but a system of rules which generates all correct forms of Sanskrit (somewhat like the grammar characterized in Chomsky 1965:v, 8–9). The rules, numbering almost 4000, (in continuous printing amounting to about 30 pages), are collected in eight (*aṣṭau*) books or chapters (*adhyāyāḥ*), hence it is called *Aṣṭādhyāyī*; (abbreviated as "A"; the numerals give the number of Adhyāya (chapter), Pāda (section) and sūtra (aphorism) respectively).

Among the rules of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, one may distinguish rules prescribing a grammatical operation (*vidhi-sūtra*), rules defining a technical term

(*saṁjñā-sūtra*), meta-rules guiding the interpretation and application of the other rules (*paribhāṣā-sūtra*), and headings (*adhikāra-sūtra*). The body of rules is accompanied by lexicons or lists of linguistic basic elements: the Dhātupāṭha (a list of verbal roots, i.e. primitive verbal stems) and Gaṇapāṭha (a list of—mostly—primitive nominal stems). The affixes form a third group of basic elements in Pāṇini's description. In books 3–5 of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* they are introduced and added to verbal and nominal (primitive and derivative) stems to form additional verbal and nominal stems and finished words. Unlike the Nirukta and Mīmāṁsā, Pāṇini is not exclusively interested in the language of the sacred texts, but gives an important place to the language in use among the well-educated of his time. His grammar "was not confined to the finite corpus of Vedic utterances, but treated Sanskrit as creative and infinite *energeia* in the sense in which that Greek term is associated with von Humboldt or Chomsky" (Staal 1995:103).

In this section, a few words will be said on the role of meanings and semantics in Pāṇini's grammar. For want of space, it will not be possible to go into the details of Pāṇini's extremely intricate system of grammar. On the other hand, it is not possible to deal with semantics in Pāṇini's system without paying at least some attention to the technical aspects of his grammar. Especially, we have to see how Pāṇini succeeds in saying so much in so few words. To accomplish this, his grammar contains a considerable number of technical terms and meta-rules. In this context the term 'meta-language' is often used, although it is important to realise that Pāṇini's 'meta-language' is structurally in fact the same as his object-language, viz. (what we may call) Sanskrit, except that there are a number of extra conventions (Cardona 1976:201–202; Davis 1978:139–43 and 1979). The meta-rules tell us something about how the rules of the grammar are to be applied (thus constituting a sort of meta-level on the meta-language). They are primarily 'exegetic guidelines' applying only to the grammar, but they also reflect insights into the semantics of the language which the grammar describes.

Merely to illustrate the economy of description achieved by Pāṇini by making use of technical terms and meta-rules, we may cite one of the rules dealing with euphonic adaptations of phonemes in combination (*sandhi*), namely A 6.1.77 *iko yaṇ aci*, which may be rendered quite literally as

> *ik* is replaced by *yaṇ* when *ac* follow.

If this enigmatic expression is interpreted in the light of the relevant meta-rules and the preceding and subsequent prescriptions, it becomes clear that it amounts to the following:

The vowel *i* and all its varieties are replaced by *y* when any vowel except a similar one follows in close proximity;
the vowel *u* and all its varieties are replaced by *v* when any vowel except a similar one follows in close proximity;
the vowel *ṛ* and all its varieties are replaced by *r* when any vowel except a similar one follows in close proximity;
the vowel *ḷ* and all its varieties are replaced by *l* when any vowel except a similar one follows in close proximity.

Examples for the application of A 6.1.77 are: *dadhi* + *atti* → *dadhyatti* ("he eats curds"); *patnī* + *eva* → *patnyeva* ("precisely the wife"); *madhu* + *āharati* → *madhvāharati* ("he takes honey").

In the rule discussed here, A 6.1.77, precisely described phonological conditions determine whether a certain grammatical operation is effective or not. The meaning of the elements with which the rule is concerned plays no immediate role at all. In numerous other cases, the condition for applying a grammatical operation is entirely or partially semantic (cf. Cardona 1976:224). This can be illustrated with reference to a set of rules in the third book of the Aṣṭādhyāyī.

A 3.1.91 "[After] a verbal stem … "(*dhātoḥ*.)
A 3.2.84 "(when the action refers to) the general past … " (*bhūte*.)
A 3.2.110 "[the l-substitutes of] *lUṄ* 'Aorist' are introduced". (*lUṄ*.)
A 3.2.111 "[When the action refers to the general past] excluding the current day [the l-substitutes of] *lAṄ* 'Imperfect tense' are introduced [after a verbal stem]". (*anadyatane lAṄ*.)
A 3.2.123 "(When the action refers to) the present, [the l-substitutes of] *lAṬ* 'Present Tense' are introduced [after a verbal stem]". (*vartamāne lAṬ*.)

Here we see that different endings, indicated by *lUṄ, lAṄ* and *lAṬ*, are prescribed. With the help of certain sūtras, the technical terms *lUṄ*, *lAṄ* and *lAṬ* lead to specific sets of verbal endings. What interests us here most, however, is that A 3.2.110, 111, 123 connect specific sets of verbal endings with references to extra-linguistic reality: in A 3.2.110 the general past is connected with a group of endings, in 3.2.11 the past which does not belong to the present day is connected with a different group of endings, and in 3.2.123 the present is connected with again a different group of endings. The ontological status of the extra-linguistic realities which figure here as conditions in Pāṇini's grammar—whether or not they are real 'realities': some would accept "time", and more specifically the three times "past", "present", and "future", as substantially real, others as definitely not ultimately real, yet all speak Sanskrit and use the same verbal endings expressing "past tense"

etc.—will be investigated several centuries after Pāṇini in the work of Bhartṛhari.

An example of a very specific semantic condition for the prescription of a nominal affix is A 5.2.120 *rūpād āhatapraśaṁsayor yap* which means "The affix *yaP* is introduced [after the nominal stem] *rūpa* "shape, form" provided it means a punched coin (*āhata*) or "praise, worth" (*praśaṁsa*)". With this rule are formed the words *rūpya*, referring to a certain coin, and *rūpya*, "handsome, lovely". Elsewhere a rule is given for the formation of a word denoting a fish: A 5.4.16 *visāriṇaḥ matsye* "[The affix *aṆ* is introduced] after the nominal stem *visārin* "that which slips" provided it means a fish".

There are conditions with a different character than those mentioned so far. Whether we consider these conditions semantic or not depends primarily on our understanding of "semantics". Consider, for instance, 8.2.83 *pratyabhivāde 'śūdre*. This has been translated as: "[A prolated vowel which is high-pitched replaces the syllable beginning with the last vowel of an utterance] when responding to a respectful greeting, except in the case of a Śūdra". (Transl. S.M. Katre.) This rule teaches that in response to a respectful greeting (e.g. *abhívādaye devadattó 'hám* "I, Devadatta, salute you reverently!") one should employ an accented, extra long vowel in the last syllable (thus: *bho ā́yuṣmān edhi devadattā́3* "O, be long-lived, Devadatta!"), but only if the person to whom one responds (here: Devadatta) does not belong to the fourth class (Śūdra) (i.e., he should belong to the three higher classes, Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas.). If a person belonging to the fourth class, say someone named Tuṣajaka, is responded to, the last syllable should not have an accented, long vowel: *ā́yuṣmān edhi tuṣajaka* "Be long-lived, Tuṣajaka!" If this rule reflects current usage in Pāṇini's time, using or not using the accented extra long vowel could be very 'significant' in certain circumstances.

Different again are conditions which depend on the intention of the speaker. Take, for instance, sūtras 5.3.70–95, which prescribe various circumstances in which the affixes *ka* and *akaC* are added to a nominal (also to a verbal) stem. According to 5.3.74 these affixes are employed *kutsite* "with regard to something or someone who is contemptible", e.g. *kutsitaḥ aśvaḥ* → *aśvakaḥ* "a bad horse, nag". According to 5.3.76, the same affixes are employed *anukampāyām* "if there is compassion" or "in the sense of compassion", e.g. *putra-ka* "poor son".

In rules like these, nouns and verbal forms are formed from a stem and an affix to denote specific meanings and in specific semantic and pragmatic

contexts. Moreover, as we have seen, there are the lists of verbal and nominal stems. Originally, they probably contained no indication of the meaning, which means that the meaning of the items was understood (on the Dhātupāṭha's e.g. Palsule 1961; differently: Bronkhorst 1981b). Passing over the problem of whether one should include pragmatic socio-linguistic and intentional factors in one's definition of semantics, it can be said that Pāṇini's rules as illustrated above generate well-formed verbs and nouns having specific meanings.

A crucial factor in language, however, is the relation between the words in a sentence or utterance, as well as the relations between their meanings. In an inflecting language like Sanskrit, these relations are primarily expressed by the endings; in an analytical language like English they are expressed by word order and prepositions. Here, it is hardly possible to connect linguistic elements on a one-to-one basis with well-defined meanings. It is very difficult, for instance, to isolate the precise meaning of "in" in English if we do not want simply to enumerate the main contexts in which it is employed. Nevertheless, to neglect this area of "relations between words" and "relations between meanings" would result in a highly impoverished model of the language. How should a grammar deal with this complicated problem? Pāṇini, in this respect most probably following his predecessors, solves the problem by introducing a group of 'labels' which functions as an intermediary between the level of semantics and that of syntax and morphology. These 'labels' are the *kāraka*s, which are, when interpreted semantically, the "factors in an action". (The word *kāraka* is an agent noun derived from the root *kṛ* "to do", but it is a more general term than *kartṛ* "agent"; here I use *factor* from Latin *facere* "to do" as a 'calque' of this term.) Examples of *kāraka*s are the agent (*kartṛ*), object (*karman*), instrument (*karaṇa*). The *kāraka*s allow the action of the verb to be accomplished. In practice, the *kāraka*s cannot be described in purely semantic terms but are dependent on syntactic factors as well. In rules A 1.4.23–55, Pāṇini defines the six *kāraka*s in semantic and syntactic terms. In another section (A 2.3.2–73) the six *kāraka*s are connected to the nominal endings (the 2nd, 3rd (twice), 4th, 5th and 7th case endings; the 1st and 6th case endings are not directly linked to any *kāraka*). It is to be noted that the general rules linking semantic features, *kāraka*s and case endings know numerous exceptions, so that there are cases in which one and the same semantic feature may be linked to different *kāraka*s and *vice versa*, and one and the same case ending may be linked to different *kāraka*s and *vice versa* (Joshi & Roodbergen 1975:xvi). Nevertheless, the *kāraka*-

system contributes to an elegant and economical description of one of the most complicated and difficult aspects of 'language in use'.

It is interesting to see that the Buddhist Candragomin, otherwise following Pāṇini (and his commentators Kātyāyana and Patañjali) to a great extent, leaves out the intermediate level of the *kāraka*s and connects non-linguistic conditions directly with the case-endings. Whether this makes Candragomin's grammar qualitatively inferior to Pāṇini's grammar or not is a point of discusion (Joshi & Roodbergen 1975:xvi-xix; Deshpande 1979).

The *kāraka*-system has attracted much scholarly attention, forming the subject of several controversies. A major difficulty lies in defining their precise status in terms of syntax and semantics, something which depends not only on one's insight into the intricacies of Pāṇini's grammar, but also on one's understanding of syntax and semantics in general. In spite of all difficulties and exceptions to the general rules, one may set up a simplified model of the six *kāraka*s mentioned by Pāṇini, and their standard connection with semantic features and case endings:

Diagram: Semantic features, the six *kāraka*s, and case endings in Pāṇini's grammar

Semantic feature described by Pāṇini	syntactic/semantic label (*kāraka*)	case ending	corresponding case names in classical European tradition
"the fixed point in relation to moving away"	*apādāna* "taking away"	fifth	ablativus
"the item one has in view through the *karman*"	*saṁpradāna* "giving"	fourth	dativus
"the most effective means"	*karaṇa* "instrument"	third	instrumentalis
"the location"	*adhikaraṇa* "receptacle, substratum"	seventh	locativus
"the item directly reached by (the action of) the agent"	*karman* "work, product, object"	second	accusativus
"the independent one"	*kartṛ* "actor"	third	instrumentalis

What do these examples and the brief reference to the *kāraka*-system tell us about meanings and semantics in Pāṇini's grammatical rules? The end-prod-

uct generated by Pāṇini's rules consists of correct words, and the 'material' from which these correct words are formed are word-elements, viz. roots, stems and affixes. What Pāṇini's grammar teaches is the correct word-forms of words in a sentence, not the meanings of the words and sentences. This is in accordance with the description of Pāṇini's grammar as

> a device which enables us to derive correct S[anskrit] words. The machinery consists of rules and technical elements, its input are word-elements, stems and suffixes, its output are any correct S[anskrit] words. (Joshi & Roodbergen 1975:i)

(The "words" which are the output, it should be noted, are words in the syntactic context of a sentence, not isolated words; cf. Bronkhorst 1979.) Here we may also refer to A 1.2.53–5 (authorship disputed), which enumerate a series of things which are normally not taught in grammar, among them the gender and number of nouns, and the meanings of affixes and of the main and subordinate members of a compound. However, to all this it should be added that the conditions for the grammatical operations on the word-elements are to an important extent semantic, which sometimes means that there is a direct reference to extra-linguistic reality (including pragmatic, social, and intentional aspects), sometimes a reference to extra-linguistic reality mediated by the *kāraka*-system. How important the meaning implicit in the word elements and resulting word forms is, becomes clear from the cases where Pāṇini formulates special rules for word forms which can be accounted for by applying other rules, except that they would then have a different meaning (cf. Bronkhorst 1979). Otherwise, however, the meaning a word has in current usage is as far as possible ignored in the application of grammatical operations.

This point is of considerable importance for a correct interpretation of the grammatical rules themselves. Pāṇini devoted a special rule (a *paribhāṣā* or meta-rule) to it: A 1.1.68 *svaṁ rūpaṁ śabdasyāśabdasaṁjñā*. According to the first part of this rule, "an expression stands for 'its own (i.e. phonological) form (*svaṁ rūpam*)'" (*svaṁ rūpaṁ śabdasya*) and the implication is that in grammar words do not have any extra-linguistic referent as they would normally have in daily usage. Thus, in the rule *agner ḍhaK* (A 4.2.33), the affix *ḍhaK* is added to the linguistic form *agni* "fire". The application of the relevant other rules in the grammar (especailly A 3.1.1 and 2; 4.1.1, 76; 4.2.24) results in the form *āgneya* which means "devoted to *agni*". What is important here is that the affix *ḍhaK* is added only to the linguistic form *agni*, not to the thing "fire", nor to other words denoting "fire" like *anala, pāvaka* etc. We can say that the word *agni* in this rule is not 'used' but

'mentioned'; or, in terms closer to Pāṇini's formulation, what is *sthāne* (from A 1.1.49 discussed above) "in the place of" (here interpretable as "meant by" or "referred to by") *agni* is its own phonological form, not the extra-linguistic thing it normally means in daily usage.

According to the second part of this rule, an expression stands for "its own (i.e. phonological) form", "unless it is a technical name for linguistic units" (*aśabdasaṁjñā*). This refers to technical names like those employed in A 6.1.77 which was discussed above: *ik, yaṇ* and *ac*. The grammatical operation prescribed in A 6.1.77 does *not* concern the terms *ik, yaṇ* and *ac* themselves (not their "own form") but the phonemes for which they stand: *i, u, ṛ, ḷ,* etc. In addition to these coined technical terms, there are words which are used in daily language and which are redefined in grammar. For instance, the word *vṛddhi* is a word current in daily language, and it means "growth, increase". But Pāṇini defines this term in the very first sūtra of his grammar as the technical name for the vowels *ā, ai, au*, which are the 'increased' forms or the 'lengthened grade' of the vowels which are *a, e* and *o* in their 'full grade'. According to the meta-rule A 1.1.68, the word *vṛddhi*, being a technical term for linguistic units, does not stand for its own form (like *agni* in A 4.2.33), but for the linguistic units which it denotes by definition.

While the meaning which words normally have in daily usage is this way expelled from the domain of grammar to a considerable extent, the meaningfulness of the words and parts of words is presupposed. This meaningfulness plays an explicit role in the definition in A 1.2.45 of a nominal stem (*prātipadika*) as a "meaningful linguistic unit (*arthavat*) other than a verbal stem (*dhātu*) or an affix (*pratyaya*)": *arthavad adhātur apratyayaḥ prātipadikam*. Verbal primitive stems (*dhātu*) (leaving the derived verbal stems out of consideration here) are defined with reference to the traditional list of verbal stems: A 1.3.1 *bhūvādayo dhātavaḥ*, refers to "*bhū* etc.", i.e. the Dhātupāṭha. Affixes are introduced in books 3–5 of the Aṣṭādhyāyī under the heading (*adhikāra-sūtra*) A 3.1.1 *pratyaya* "affix", and may form derived verbal and nominal stems. The finished word (*pada*) is defined in purely formal terms as "that which has a verbal or nominal ending" (A 1.4.14 *sUP-tiṄ-antaṁ padam*). This includes nouns with e.g. first, second, third, etc. ending, in the singular for instance *vṛkṣaḥ*, *vṛkṣam*, *vṛkṣeṇa* etc.; and finite verbal forms such as *bhavāmi* "I am", *bhavasi* "you are" etc.; and moreover indeclinables (*avyayam*) which are defined as nominal forms which drop all affixes indicating gender and case and number (A 2.4.82 *avyayād āp-sup-aḥ*). Although in the definition of verbal stems and finished words and in the

general reference to affixes semantic conditions play no explicit role, their presupposed meaningfulness comes to the surface in A 1.2.45.

Summarizing Section 6.1, it can be said that the grammatical operations in Pāṇini's grammar deal with linguistic forms, whose meaningfulness is presupposed but whose meanings are not directly subjected to the grammatical operations. Generally speaking, meanings are not as separate elements part of the input or output of the grammar (differently: Bronkhorst 1979 and 1992a; Deshpande 1990:33–35). Nevertheless, they play an important role, directly or indirectly, in a great number of the operational rules in the form of semantic conditions (often through the intermediary of the *kāraka*-system). Occasionally, special rules are to be formulated for a word in a specific meaning, if the form of the word would be associated with the wrong meaning if accounted for with other rules. One area where semantic conditions are largely irrelevant can be identified, viz. the euphonic combinations (*sandhi*) which depend on the juxtaposition of types of phonemes.

6.2 Early commentators on Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī: Kātyāyana and Patañjali.

In Pāṇini's system of grammatical rules, explicit theoretical discussions of linguistic and semantic problems cannot be expected. They are found for the first time in the Pāṇinian tradition in the brief comments (*Vārttika*s) of Kātyāyana on Pāṇini's grammar, and in Patañjali's Great Commentary (*Mahābhāṣya*) which discusses both Pāṇini's grammar and Kātyāyana's comments on it. Kātyāyana and Patañjali did have predecessors but of their work only some stray quotations are left. Kātyāyana's brief comments usually raise questions concerning a great number of Pāṇini's sūtras; they propose additions, reformulations and deletions, and point out philosophical and linguistic problems and issues. Patañjali gives more elaborate discussions and often tries to justify Pāṇini's sūtras against doubts uttered by Kātyāyana.

Especially the introductory section of Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya is rich in semantic and philosophical topics, for instance in the discussion on the definition of *śabda* "word, sound", and on the relation between *śabda* and *artha*. With regard to the latter subject, Kātyāyana upholds that the relation between these two is *siddha* "well-established". According to Patañjali, not only the relation, but also *śabda* and *artha* are *nitya* "eternal, permanent". This leads him to a discussion of the nature of the meaning of a word (*padārtha*), whether it is the *ākṛti* i.e., "shape" or "universal" that is *nitya*, or rather the *dravya* i.e., "substance" or "individual". At the end, however,

he does not commit himself to one theory to the exclusion of the other. He thinks that grammar has to accept whatever is permanent according to these different views as the word meaning: "what use do we [i.e., we as grammarians] derive from saying that this is *nitya* "permanent" and that is *anitya* "non-permanent"?" (cf. Joshi & Roodbergen 1986:90–113)

Among the numerous other passages in the Mahābhāṣya which are of interest from the point of view of linguistics and semantics, three may be singled out as of particular importance for later developments. The first passage occurs in Patañjali's commentary on A 1.2.45. As we have seen (p. 91), this rule gives a definition of a nominal stem (*prātipadika*) as a "meaningful linguistic unit (*arthavat*) other than a verbal stem (*dhātu*) or an affix (*pratyaya*)". Kātyāyana first questions this definition: "The meaningfulness [of a nominal stem] cannot be justified, since it is never uttered in isolation" (*arthavattā nopapadyate, kevalenāvacanāt*, *Mahābhāṣya, Vārttika* 7 on A 1.2.45). In daily usage, people never use the bare stem without an ending, they speak in sentences or at least in finished words. So how can one say that the nominal stem is a meaningful unit? Kātyāyana's own answer is: "However, [meaningfulness of the nominal stem] is established on the basis of *anvaya* and *vyatireka*" (*siddhaṁ tv anvaya-vyatirekābhyām*, *Mahābhāṣya, Vārttika* 9 on A 1.2.45). The two terms *anvaya* and *vyatireka* may be translated as "continuity" and "discontinuity". In the present context, they refer, respectively, to the continuity of a linguistic unit together with the continuity of a meaning-element, and to the absence of a linguistic unit together with the absence of a meaning-element. Patañjali elaborates Kātyāyana's answer as follows:

> That [viz. the meaningfulness of nominal stems] is established. How? [This is done] on the basis of continuity (*anvaya*) and discontinuity (*vyatireka*). What is this "continuity and discontinuity"? When one says *vṛkṣas* "a tree", one hears some linguistic form, [viz.] the linguistic form *vṛkṣa* ending in *a*, and the affix *s*. One also understands some meaning, (viz.) something having roots, a stem, fruits and leaves, and singularity. When someone says *vṛkṣau* "two trees", some form is lost, some form is added and some form continues. The *s* is lost, the *au* is added, and the form *vṛkṣa* ending in *a* continues. Similarly, some meaning is lost, some is added, and some continues. [The meaning element of] singularity is lost, [that of] duality is added, and [the meaning element of] something having roots, a stem, fruits and leaves continues. Thus, we believe that the linguistic form which is lost (viz. the *s*) possesses that meaning which is lost (viz. singularity), the form which is added (viz. *au*) possesses that meaning which is added (viz. duality), and the form which continues (viz. *vṛkṣa*) possesses that meaning which continues (viz. something having roots, a stem, fruits and leaves).
> *siddham etat ¦ katham ¦ anvayād vyatirekāc ca ¦ ko 'sāv anvayo vyatireko vā ¦ iha vṛkṣa*

ity ukte kaś cic chabdaḥ śrūyate vṛkṣaśabdo 'kārāntaḥ sakāraś ca pratyayaḥ ¦ artho 'pi kaś cid gamyate mūla-skandha-phala-palāśavān ekatvaṁ ca ¦ vṛkṣāv ity ukte kaś cic chabdo hīyate, kaś cid upajāyate, kaś cid anvayī ¦ sakāro hīyate, aukāra upajāyate, vṛkṣaśabdo 'kārānto 'nvayī ¦ artho 'pi kaś cid dhīyate, kaś cid upajāyate, kaś cid anvayī ¦ ekatvaṁ hīyate, dvitvam upajāyate, mūla-skandha-phala-palāśavān anvayī ¦ te manyāmahe ¦ yaḥ śabdo hīyate tasyāsāv artho yo 'rtho hīyate ¦ yaḥ śabda upajāyate tasyāsāv artho yo 'rtha upajāyate, yaḥ śabdo 'nvayī tasyāsāv artho yo 'rtho'nvayī. (*Mahābhāṣya* 1:219.20–27; cf. Deshpande 1992:7–8.))

This method of 'continuity and discontinuity' provides a logical basis for semantic analysis (segmentation) of linguistic units (cf. Deshpande 1992:6–8; Cardona 1968). In a different terminology, we came across a similar method in the Mīmāṁsā (*Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* 4.1.15, see above, p. 80–1). In later grammatical texts and texts of other disciplines (exegesis, logic), it is usually the term *anvaya-vyatireka* which is used. The status of the meaningful elements arrived at through *anvaya-vyatireka* ("how real are they as meaningful units?") is an important issue in later semantic discussions between different schools and disciplines (see below). A closely related issue is: how far should we go in our analysis of meaningful elements?; more specifically this means in practice: should phonemes be considered meaningful elements or not? The *Mahābhāṣya* provides arguments both for considering them meaningful and for considering them meaningless, but at the end of the interesting discussion (*Mahābhāṣya* 1:30–1, 220; Houben 1995c:41–4) phonemes are not considered meaningful (other thinkers apparently continued to consider phonemes meaningful, cf. *Vākyapadīya* 2.62 and Houben 1995b:48–51).

Two other important passages in the *Mahābhāṣya* occur in the commentary on A 2.1.1, *samarthaḥ padavidhiḥ*. Interpreted as a meta-rule (*paribhāṣā*) A 2.1.1 means that an operational rule concerning finished words (*padavidhiḥ*) takes effect only if the elements to which the rule refers are *samarthaḥ* "semantically (and syntactically) connected". The word *samarthaḥ* can be interpreted literally as "having the same or a corresponding purpose or meaning", and in the discussions of the Pāṇinians it refers to semantic and syntactic connectedness: "having semantic connection as indicated by syntactic elements" (Joshi 1968:vi) (as we have seen in our discussion of the *kāraka*-system, no hard and fast line can be drawn in Pāṇinian grammar between semantics and syntactics). To illustrate the implications of A 2.1.1 we may take as an example the expression *rājñaḥ puruṣaḥ*, meaning "the king's servant". Here, the word *rājñaḥ* "the king's" and the word *puruṣaḥ* "servant" are not only juxtaposed, but they are also semantically connected, and this semantic connection is syntactically represented in the sixth or genitive

ending of *rājñaḥ* "the king's". The two words are therefore open to the application of A 2.2.8, which allows the formation of a special type of compound from a word with the sixth case ending with another word (with which it should be semantically and syntactically connected according to meta-rule 2.1.1). This results in the compound *rājapuruṣaḥ* "the king's servant". On the other hand, in the expression *bhāryā rājñaḥ puruṣo devadattasya* "the wife of the king, the servant of Devadatta", the same two words *rājñaḥ* "the king's" and *puruṣaḥ* "servant" are juxtaposed, but now they are without semantic and syntactic connection. Hence, the operation of A 2.2.8 is blocked and no compounding takes place.

This meta-rule A 2.1.1 provides an occasion for the discussion of several important semantic and linguistic issues. In this discussion it is investigated in what sense the elements integrated in a compound should be semantically and syntactically connected. Another criterion for compounding is brought forward: the uncompounded expression and the compounded expression should be similar in meaning. This leads to the important question of the relation between grammar and the meanings of words: are meanings *kārya* "produced (by grammar)" or are they *svābhāvika* "natural" i.e. "given beforehand, outside the context of grammar"? Patañjali first says that denotation of meaning is something natural or given, since the rules of grammar do not teach meanings. But to this an objection is raised: Pāṇini has formulated rules like A 2.2.24 *anekam anyapadārthe*, A 2.2.29 *cārthe dvandvaḥ* and other rules, which seem to teach meanings. (According to A 2.2.24 two or more nominal words can combine with each other to form an exocentric compound (*bahuvrīhi*); A 2.2.29 defines the copulative or *dvandva*-type of compound as the one in which the compounded words are connected in the sense of *ca* "and".)

Patañjali's answer to this objection is:

> These (rules, A 2.2.24, 2.2.29 and others) do not teach meanings. Of these words, which are naturally endowed with these meanings, explanation is given through [something] which is [merely] an instrument (*nimittatvena*, "through the instrumentality [of something]"). For instance, "the path is on the right-hand side of the well" *kūpe hastadakṣiṇaḥ panthāḥ*; "look at the moon in the cloud" *abhre candramanasaṁ paśya*: Of the path and moon which are (already) naturally located there, an explanation is given through [something] which is [merely] an instrument. In the same way here too: what is in (or close to) the meaning of *ca* "and" is a *dvandva*-compound, what is in (or close to) the meaning of another word (not included in the compound) is (called) *bahuvrīhi*.
>
> (It may be asked:) But why are meanings not taught (in grammar)?
>
> (Answer:) This is for the sake of brevity… . Certainly, someone who teaches meanings

would necessarily have to give his teaching by means of some word. [But], to begin with, by which [word] is the [teaching] of thát [word] given, by which the [first teaching] is given? … This way there is *regressus ad infinitum*. To teach meaning is in fact impossible. For who, really, is capable to teach the meanings of verbal stems, nominal stems, affixes, particles?
naitāny arthādeśanāni ¦ svabhāvata eteṣāṁ śabdānām eteṣv artheṣv abhiniviṣṭānāṁ nimittatvenānvākhyānaṁ kriyate ¦ tad yathā ¦ kūpe hastadakṣiṇaḥ panthāḥ ¦ abhre candramanasaṁ paśyeti svabhāvatas tatrasthasya pathaś candramasaś ca nimittatvenākhyānaṁ kriyate ¦ evam ihāpi cārthe yaḥ sa dvandva-samāso 'nya-padārthe yaḥ sa bahuvrīhir iti ¦
kiṁ punaḥ kāraṇam arthā nādiśyante ¦
tac ca laghv-artham … avaśyaṁ hy anenārthān ādiśatā kena cic chabdena nirdeśaḥ kartavyaḥ syāt ¦ tasya ca tāvat kena kṛto yenāsau kriyate … ity anavasthā ¦ asaṁbhavaḥ khalv apy arthādeśanasya ¦ ko hi nāma samartho dhātu-prātipadika-pratyaya-nipātānām arthān ādeṣṭum ¦ (*Mahābhāṣya* 1:363.11–9; cf. Joshi 1968:67–8)

Patañjali's clarifications are in accordance with what we found above in the structure of Pāṇini's grammar, viz. that meanings do not belong to the input or output of the grammar as separate elements, but that they play an important role as semantic conditions in a great number of the operational rules. These semantic conditions are not a purpose in itself: they merely 'show the way' as to which linguistic items are to be chosen and to be subjected to the grammatical operations.

That Pāṇini's grammar presupposes familiarity with the meanings of most expressions, is also in accordance with its cultural context—even if we know this context only indirectly, e.g. as reflected by early commentators. Grammar professes to be the discipline dealing with *śabda*, the "word" or "linguistic form" (*Mahābhāṣya* 1:1.1). Those for whom the grammar is intended are already familiar with one or more varieties or dialects of 'Sanskrit' or Indo-Aryan. An important purpose, also mentioned by Patañjali in his commentary, is to distinguish 'correct' formations from alternative forms which are considered substandard. The meanings are not the main problem in the case of most words. Words in Vedic texts which do present a problem as regards their meaning are dealt with in the *Nirukta*. And for the interpretation of problematic passages in Vedic ritual texts, the Mīmāṁsā developed a system of interpretation which worked on the basis of the assumption that words in the sacred texts are as much as possible similar to those used in daily life.

It is obvious that A 2.1.1 concerns first of all the formation of compound words. This is also accepted by Patañjali. Nevertheless, at a certain point in the discussion he extends the scope of this rule to include the words in a sentence as well. The implication is now that all rules in the grammar concern

words which are related to each other in a sentence. This leads to technical problems in the case of some rules. These problems, in turn, make it necessary to define the sentence (*vākya*), a unit which is accepted but not defined by Pāṇini. In the style of his 'brief comments', Kātyāyana gives as the definition of the sentence: "the sentence is the (finite) verb together with indeclinable, *kāraka* and qualifier (i.e., noun-qualifying word)" (*ākhyātaṁ sāvyaya-kāraka-viśeṣaṇaṁ vākyam*). This is elaborated and partly amended by Patañjali as follows:

> It should be stated that the verb, together with indeclinable, together with *kāraka*, together with qualifier, receives the designation "sentence".
> (Illustrations:) "Together with indeclinable": *uccaiḥ paṭhati* "he reads aloud"; *nīcaiḥ paṭhati* "he reads softly". "Together with *kāraka*": *odanaṁ pacati* "he cooks the rice". "Together with qualifier": *odanaṁ mṛduviśadaṁ pacati* "he cooks the rice (so that it becomes) soft, without the grains sticking together".
> It should be stated: [the verb, etc.] also together with the adverb [receives the designation "sentence"].
> (Illustrations:) *suṣṭhu pacati* "he cooks well"; *duṣṭhu pacati* "he cooks badly".
> Some other (grammarian) says: The verb together with a qualifying word [receives the designation "sentence"]; that's all. Because all these (the indeclinable etc.) are qualifying words [to the verb].
> *ākhyātaṁ sāvyayaṁ sakārakaṁ sakāraka-viśeṣaṇaṁ vākya-saṁjñaṁ bhavatīti vaktavyam ¦ sāvyayam ¦ uccaiḥ paṭhati ¦ nīcaiḥ paṭhati ¦ sa-kārakam ¦ odanaṁ pacati ¦ sa-kāraka-viśeṣaṇam ¦ odanaṁ mṛdu-viśadaṁ pacati ¦*
> *sa-kriyā-viśeṣaṇaṁ ceti vaktavyam ¦ suṣṭhu pacati ¦ duṣṭhu pacati ¦*
> *apara āha ¦ ākhyātaṁ sa-viśeṣaṇam ity eva ¦ sarvāṇi hy etāni kriyā-viśeṣaṇāni ¦*
> (*Mahābhāṣya* 1:367.11–5; cf. Joshi 1968:106–108)

In addition to this definition, Kātyāyana gives the definition *ekatiṅ* "(the sentence is) that which has a single verb". According to Patañjali this definition includes, unlike the preceding definitions, a sentence like *brūhi, brūhi* "speak, speak!" which consists of a single verb repeated twice, without any qualifier.

It is to be noted that the definitions proposed by Kātyāyana and Patañjali are to a considerable extent formal definitions. However, semantic criteria do apply to the units *kāraka* and *viśeṣaṇa* referred to in the first definition of Kātyāyana and Patañjali's discussion of it. The grammarians' definitions may be contrasted with the sentence definition of the Mīmāṁsakas (above p. 79–80) which is much more semantic. The contrast between these two definitions played an important role in Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*, in the part in which words and sentences are investigated from various semantic, linguistic and philosophical angles. The topic of the definition of a sentence and its

semantic, linguistic and philosophical implications will remain important for all later major texts on semantics, whether written by grammarians, logicians (Nyāya, Buddhist or Jaina) or Mīmāṁsakas.

7 Logic, Ontology and Semantics in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika

Like the Mīmāṁsā-system and the disciplines of Nirukta ("etymology") and Vyākaraṇa ("grammar"), the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are systems which accept the authority of the Veda. In view of their involvement with exegesis, etymology and grammar of sacred texts and partly of the current language of the well-educated, language and meaning are quite naturally major and central concerns in the Mīmāṁsā, Nirukta and Vyākaraṇa. We have seen that the Mīmāṁsā as a system of philosophy, in order to defend the authority of the Veda, bases itself mainly on the Veda itself and claims that, since the text is authorless and since the relation between word and meaning is eternal, its validity is unquestionable. The position of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems of philosophy is different. Instead of trying to validate the Veda on the basis of the Veda, they try to back it up with logical and ontological arguments.

7.1 The Vaiśeṣika-system

Of the two schools, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, the latter is the older one with 200 BCE–100 CE as the approximate date of the earliest extant text, viz. the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* attributed to Kaṇāda (cf. Matilal 1977:54). The first explicit reference to the Vaiśeṣikas is the one by the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (first or second century CE). The main concern of the Vaiśeṣika-system is the enumeration and categorization of all real entities of the universe. In the classical Vaiśeṣika-system, six categories are accepted which together should comprise everything that is "existing, knowable and expressible". The six categories are: Substance (*dravya*), Quality (*guṇa*), Action (*karma*), Particular (*viśeṣa*), Universal (*sāmānya*) and Inherence (*samavāya*). In their attempt to establish the entities and categories accepted by them, the Vaiśeṣikas try to make use of only two sources of reliable knowledge: direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). The entities which 'really exist' according to the Vaiśeṣikas include the soul (*ātman*), which is a substance (*dravya*) just like earth (*pṛthivī*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), wind (*vāyu*), space (*ākāśa*), time (*kāla*), direction (*diś*) and mind (*manas*). Soul, space, time and direction are omnipresent substances. Mind is understood as a mental organ

of the size of an atom. Earth, water, fire and wind are atomic substances which form conglomerates (e.g. a clay pot made of earth-atoms).

The Vaiśeṣikas also provide a theory of liberation of the soul, in which Vedic ritual plays a definite role and Brahminical class-distinctions are adhered to. The implicit opponents in this theory are no doubt the Buddhists, who question the existence of the soul and claim to provide a way to liberation which is independent of Vedic ritual and ignores Brahminical distinctions.

For the Vaiśeṣikas, language (*śabda*) comes into the picture in three ways. First, they are aware that language is for some other philosophers an important independent source of reliable knowledge, apart from direct perception and inference. Especially the language of the Veda is crucial for the Mīmāṁsā-philosophers, as it is for them the only source of reliable knowledge on *dharma* ''the collection of ritual, religious and moral duties''. Second, language is part of reality and is to be categorized somewhere in the system, if the Vaiśeṣikas are to maintain their claim to be comprehensive. A third issue, related to the preceding two, is the relation between word (*śabda*) and thing-meant (*artha*).

With regard to the first issue, the Vaiśeṣikas argue that language as a source of reliable knowledge is to be placed under the heading of 'inference' (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 9.18–9). They also accept the validity of the Veda, but instead of trying to defend it in the way the Mīmāṁsā did, viz. by excluding the possibility of mistakes by denying that the Veda has any human or divine author, they argue as follows: The very existence of the Vedic sentences shows that the authors must have been *ṛṣi*s ''Seers'', who have perceptual capacities superior to those of normal people (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 6.1.1–3; cf. 2.1.18).

The second issue is: how to categorize language in a systematic and comprehensive description of reality? Here, the Vaiśeṣikas take language (comprising words, phonemes and sentences) in its sound-aspect only (the Sanskrit word *śabda* may refer to both sound and to language), and argue at length that it is to be considered a quality (*guṇa*) of space (*ākāśa*), and that it is not eternal (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 2.1.24–6; 2.2.24–37).

The third issue is: what is the relation between word (*śabda*) and thing-meant (*artha*)? While language and words are taken in their physical aspect for the purpose of categorization in the system, the Vaiśeṣikas do admit that we understand things from words. In order to safeguard the validity of the Veda, the Mīmāṁsakas argued that the relation between *śabda* and *artha* is

eternal. Such an eternal relation is rejected by the Vaiśeṣikas. In their system they accept two types of relation. The first is connection (*saṁyoga*), a relation between entities which can also be separated, e.g. my hand touching the table. The second is inherence (*samavāya*), which is a much more intimate relation such as the one between a red object and its red color: here the red color can never be perceived apart from the object in which it is inherent. Arguing (in sūtras 7.2.15–24) that neither of these relations obtains between *śabda* and *artha*, the Vaiśeṣikas conclude that there is no relation at all, and that we understand the intended thing from a word only through convention (*samaya*):

> *Śabda* and *artha* are unrelated.... The understanding of an *artha* from a *śabda* is based on convention (*samaya*).
> *śabdārthāv asaṁbaddhau ... sāmayikaḥ śabdād arthapratyayaḥ.* (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 7.2.19, 24)

One of the reasons why there can be no relation between *śabda* and *artha* is that a person may speak about something non-existent (e.g. "there is no pot"). In that case the word would have a relation with something non-existing, which is evidently impossible (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 7.2.18). Another argument is that there are occasions when there is no understanding (a later commentator explains: if one does not know the *saṁketa* "convention" underlying the words of the language) and this would not be possible if words and things were related (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 7.2.22).

The Vaiśeṣikas, therefore, reject any relation between *śabda* ("word") and *artha* ("thing-meant") in an explanation of understanding meaning from language. Nevertheless, in their attempt to establish their entities, they sometimes make use of a peculiar argument: because a word for it exists, we conclude that there must be a corresponding real entity. The existence of *vāyu* ("wind") as a substance, for instance, can be established only in a very general way by argumentation. However, since a name for it exists, and since one gives a name to things only after having perceived them, one has to assume, according to the Vaiśeṣikas, that higher beings perceived *vāyu* directly as a substance and gave it its name (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 2.1.9–19). This argument clarifies how the Vaiśeṣikas can place language (i.e., verbal testimony) under the heading of inference (e.g., "from word B we infer entity A"), although no relation between word and thing-meant is acknowledged. Normally, however, when A is inferred from B they assume some relation between A and B, e.g. a causal relation or a relation of oppositon (*Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* 9.18).

In this context, it is of interest that the Vaiśeṣikas use the word *padārtha* to denote what is usually translated as "category". The literal meaning of *padārtha* is "meaning of the word", and in the Vaiśeṣika-system this "meaning" or "thing-meant" (*artha*) is a real entity in its own right (unlike the Aristotelian categories, which are only *categories* of real entities). Because the Vaiśeṣikas themselves argue 'from the word to the thing', there is probably some truth in Faddegon's proposition (Faddegon 1918:109) that their classification of existing entities in six categories has something to do with the structure of their language: "For, when taking into consideration the typical and most original meanings of the word-classes, we are allowed to say that substantives, adjectives, verbs and particles respectively denote things, qualities, actions and relations". Here, the "things, qualities, actions and relations" would correspond to the three basic Vaiśeṣika-categories Substance, Quality, and Action, and the last category Inherence, which is a special type of relation. Faddegon further points out, in this connection, that several relational notions which are expressed by attributive words in Sanskrit (and in many other Indo-European languages), viz. number, distance, time and rank, are considered qualities in the Vaiśeṣika-system (Faddegon 1918:109).

7.2 The Nyāya-system

A major concern of the earliest Nyāya-system (ca. 2nd century CE) was the art of disputation. Nyāya made clear the logical and theoretical categories to be distinguished in a debate situation. Ontologically, the Nyāya-philosophers followed the Vaiśeṣikas to a considerable extent, e.g. with regard to the soul's existence and liberation. Like the Vaiśeṣikas, the Nyāya-philosophers consider *śabda* non-eternal and, according to the earliest commentary, a quality of space (*ākāśa*). The main emphasis, however, is on the critical investigation of the *pramāṇa*s or sources of reliable knowledge. Apart from the two *pramāṇa*s accepted by the Vaiśeṣikas, viz. direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*), the Nyāya-philosophers accept two more: *śabda* "language (i.e., verbal testimony)" and *upamāna* "comparison". The different *pramāṇa*s are defined as separate sources of knowledge. Thus, for instance, perception is defined in such a way that it refers to perceptual knowledge only, independent of verbal knowledge. The defence of direct perception as a source of knowledge independent from language becomes inextrically bound up with semantic, logical and epistemological problems

in later discussions between Nyāya-philosophers and their opponents of other schools (cf. Matilal 1986).

In early Nyāya, the most important issues with a direct bearing on semantics are (1) the defence of *śabda* as a separate source of reliable knowledge, and (2), closely related with this, the relation between *śabda* and *artha*; further (3) the ontological status of the thing referred to by words.

To introduce its defence of *śabda* as an independent source of reliable knowledge, the Nyāya-sūtras have an opponent say that *śabda* is nothing else but inference, since something unperceived is to be inferred (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.1.49). Moreover, says the opponent, there is a relation between *śabda* and *artha*, i.e., between word and thing-meant (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.1.51). The opponents' presupposition seems to be that because of this relation, the word, which is perceived, permits one to infer the thing-meant, which is not perceived. In answer to the opponent's view, the Nyāya position is presented: "From a word there arises understanding of the thing-meant because there is instruction by a reliable person" (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.1.52 *āptopadeśasāmarthyāc chabdād artha-saṁpratyayaḥ*). Next, the existence of a relation between word and thing-meant is refuted: "And because one does not perceive filling, burning, [or] cutting [when someone pronounces the words "food", "fire" and "sword" respectively], there is no relation [between word and thing-meant]" (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.1.53 *pūraṇa-pradāha-pāṭanānupalabdheś ca saṁbandhābhāvaḥ*). An additional argument to reject a relation between word and meaning, is that different people use the same words for different things (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.1.56).

The third issue mentioned above is: what is it that a word refers to? As a preliminary to the discussion of this issue, Nyāya defines the word (*pada*) as "phonemes with an ending": *Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.2.56 *te* (sc. *varṇāḥ*) *vibhaktyantāḥ padam* "These [phonemes] form a word if they have a (nominal or verbal) ending". The definition is similar to Pāṇini's *sup-tiṅ-antam padam*, except that the latter uses a more technical terminology. Next, the Nyāya-sūtras advance arguments to show that the word (in the discussion: a noun) denotes the individual (*vyakti*), that it denotes the configuration or shape (*ākṛti*), and that it denotes the universal (*jāti*). As we have seen, the Mīmāṁsā defended the view that the word primarily denotes only the *ākṛti* which they use in many contexts as an equivalent for the word *jāti* in the sense of "universal". The Nyāya-sūtras give arguments for all three, the *vyakti*, *ākṛti*, and *jāti* (*Nyāya-Sūtra* 2.2.57–67). For instance, if one speaks of a herd of cows or a certain number of them, the *indvidual* cows must be meant, otherwise

just saying "cow" would suffice for all of them as the same universal "cowness" resides in the cows. But the problem with assuming that the word refers to the individual is that we would need an unlimited number of words since there are an unlimited number of individuals. If it is assumed that the word cow, for instance, denotes the *ākṛti*, "shape" or "configuration", of a cow, it is possible to explain that a single word "cow" refers to numerous individual cows. But even then there are problems, because a cow of clay has the configuration of a cow and is an individual, but it is nevertheless certainly not a real cow. The Nyāya-philosophers conclude that the word denotes all three: *vyakti, ākṛti,* as well as *jāti*.

8 Challenging the Brahminical tradition: Buddhists and Jainas

For the philosophers of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika as well as Mīmāṁsā, the Buddhists and Jainas are extremely important opponents. Both the Buddhists and the Jainas reject the validity of the Veda and also the eternal relation between word and meaning postulated by the Mīmāṁsā-philosophers in order to defend this validity. Both groups, moreover, have a tradition of canonical texts of their own whose validity is based on the omniscience of the founders of the two religions, the Buddha and the Mahāvīra respectively. In the context of the present essay no full justice can be done to the starting points of semantic theories in these traditions (in the earliest periods largely in languages other than Sanskrit) but the emphasis will be on some of the theories which were polemically defended in Sanskrit. Buddhists and Jainas differ considerably in their ontological doctrines, and hence also in their views regarding the nature of words and the things to which words refer.

8.1 The Jainas

To start with the latter, because the extensive sources of the Jainas are still insufficiently studied, because it is moreover very difficult to isolate the oldest parts (which interest us here most) in the Jaina scriptures from later additions and changes, and also because the theme of semantics in the Jaina tradition has hardly received any specific attention till now, only a few features of the Jaina ideas on language and reality can be discussed here. The subject of the ancient Jaina scriptures in Ardhamāgadhī can be described as the investigation of reality and the place of man and the soul in it. Only the Jainas of the Śvetāmbara subsect accept the extant scriptures in Ardhamāga-

dhī as authentic. According to the other major subsect of the Digambara Jainas, however, all original scriptures are lost and all extant texts are secondary (Dundas 1992:69–70). In the *Tattvārtha-Sūtra,* which is an important text for both subsects, the contents of the extensive Ardhamāgadhī scriptures are concisely and systematically presented in Sanskrit. The most important entities in Jaina ontology are the soul (*jīva*), matter (*pudgala*), and space (*ākāśa*) (cf. Dixit 1971:34–35). On matter or material objects (*pudgala*s), the *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* has the following to say:

> The *pudgala*-s are characterized by touch, taste, smell and colour.
> They are also characterized by sound, binding, subtleness, grossness, configuration, splitting, darkness, shadow, hot radiation and non-hot radiation.
> *Pudgala* is of the form of an atom and of the form of an aggregate.
> *sparśa-rasa-gandha-varṇa-vantaḥ pudgalāḥ; śabda-bandha-saukṣmya-sthaulya-saṁsthāna-bheda-tamaś-chāyā-tapo-dyota-vantaś ca; aṇavaḥ skandhāś ca. Tattvārtha-Sūtra* 5.23–5.

Sound (*śabda*, which includes speech-sounds) is therefore one of the attributes of an atom or an aggregate of atoms here. As for the souls, they are everywhere in the Jaina universe, not only in human beings, but also in animals, plants, water, air, fire. What is remarkable about the Jaina view on language is the following. A living being (a soul plus a body), according to the Jainas, needs matter, which it accumulates by taking food and by breathing, not only for the subsistence of its body, but also for speech and thought. Thus, when someone prepares himself to speak, he accumulates 'speech particles', which he expels when speaking (Dixit 1971:36, 55; Dundas forthcoming). Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the Jainas started to write Sanskrit grammars which follow Pāṇini to a very great extent, but try to achieve even greater brevity, among other things by adopting a number of mono-syllabic technical terms (cf. Scharfe 1977:168–9).

In logic the Jainas have become famous for what is called the *anekānta-vāda*, or the theory of non-onesidedness. This theory accepts beforehand that with regard to any issue different points of view are possible, and that different predications can be made about it. Thus, instead of saying that the soul or an object, e.g. a pot, exists (that it is real), or that it does not exist (that it is illusory), a Jaina philosopher would make seven predications, saying (1) that it exists from a certain point of view; (2) that it also does not exist from a certain point of view; (3) that, from a certain point of view, it both exists and does not exist; (4) that it is inexpressible from a certain point of view; (5) that, from a certain point of view, it both exists and is inexpressible; (6) that, from a certain point of view, it both does not exist and is inexpressible;

and finally (7) that, from a certain point of view, it exists, does not exist, and is also inexpressible (cf. Matilal 1985:306–9).

Different possible points of view (*naya*s) have also been enumerated by the Jainas but their interpretation in the older texts does not seem very consistent (Dixit 1971:24–25). Important points of view are the *vyavahāra-naya* "point of view of popular usage" and the *śabda-naya* "point of view of language"; sometimes mention is made of a *niścaya-naya* "conclusive point of view, viewpoint of certainty". Only in later attempts to elaborate these *naya*s (from the author Jinabhadra, 6th century CE, onward; cf. Dixit 1971: 122–124), do we find clear and explicit reflections on word meaning and the ontology of linguistic referents, but it is difficult to isolate the proper contribution of the Jainas of this time in the context of discussions with other philosophical schools.

8.2 The Buddhists

In the case of the Buddhists, the major texts have been studied much more intensively, both in a general way and with regard to problems of language and meaning. These problems, remaining often implicit in the earliest sources available, were more extensively addressed in texts belonging to the different philosophical schools which developed some centuries after the Buddha.

According to a well-known story, two monks, disciples of the Buddha and Brahmins by birth, told the Buddha that they recited his words, in order to prevent their corruption, in the way of the *chandas*, which probably means in the way of the Vedic texts or in Vedic metre. The Buddha was not pleased with this, rebuked the two monks, and told his disciples to give the teaching of the Buddha "in their own dialect" (*sakāya niruttiyā*) (Brough 1980). The rejection of the Vedic (or pre-Sanskrit) language for his teaching allowed the Buddha and his followers to be more closely in touch with the masses, but it is one of the reaons for doubts regarding the reliability of the tradition which transmitted his words (cf. von Hinüber 1989:71). Fortunately, the witness of early Chinese translations (from the second century CE onwards) comes to our help in some cases, showing that several changes did occur in the Pāli-text tradition which is usually considered to contain the oldest material (Vetter 1994; cf. Bechert 1980).

In the teaching of the Buddha as transmitted in the tradition, four 'Noble Truths' take a central position. The first is that birth, old age, disease, death are all unhappiness; the second that this unhappiness has a cause, viz. craving

leading to rebirth; the third that this unhappiness can be eliminated; and the fourth is the eightfold path leading to this elimination (the path consists of, among other things, proper views, proper speech, proper conduct, and proper meditation). In the context of the second truth, the ancient Buddhist scriptures contain expositions on a chain of factors, which lead to birth and unhappiness (Vetter 1988:14–16).

In this chain of "conditioned or dependent origination (*pratītya-samut-pāda*)", birth and unhappiness are first traced back, via a few other factors, to craving (*taṇhā/tṛṣṇā*, "thirst"). This, in turn, is traced back to *vedanā* "emotion", which is in turn conditioned by *phassa/sparśa* "contact". The latter is conditioned by *nāmarūpa* "name-form", which is conditioned by *viññāna/vijñāna* "consciousness", and *viññāna/vijñāna* is again conditioned by *nāmarūpa* "name-form" (cf. Vetter 1988:45–53). The latter expression, *nāmarūpa* "name-form", we recognize from our discussion of the Vedic texts. The term as used in the Buddhist canon is not easy to interpret—contextually it refers to a combination of psychical and physical constituents of a person, cf. Vetter 1988:48—but taken literally it clearly refers to an aspect of language, and this aspect was still understood from the term by later Buddhist interpreters. Although the Buddha apparently did not emphasize the importance of language, it can be said that the canonical texts suggest that language occupies its place in the whole chain of conditions leading to suffering, and in order to overcome this suffering an understanding of the chain, including the role of language and language-dependent awareness, was of considerable importance.

A striking feature of the doctrine of 'conditioned origination' is that it explains suffering and rebirth without directly referring to a soul or person who would be the subject of the suffering and rebirth. In other contexts too, the Buddha's unwillingness to acknowledge as real the soul and other 'things' which occupied a central place in the doctrines of e.g. Upaniṣadic teachers, is remarkable. Although the Buddha does not explicitly reject the existence of the soul or self, the later Buddhist tradition generally understood his attitude as implying such a rejection. Thus, on the basis of the canonical sources and in the light of these later developments it can be said:

> As far back as we can trace the teaching of the Buddha we find a penetrating analysis by which unities are dissolved into their constituent parts and true diversity is revealed. An ability to look behind unities and see them as merely words, convenient but misleading linguistic constructs, has always formed an important factor in developing insight meditation … The Buddha himself dissolved away the unity we call the human being, or person, into an ever-changing series of physical matter, sensations, concep-

> tions, further mental contents such as volitions and so on, and consciousness. Thus there is dissolved away any real Self, any essence or unchanging referent for the name, the word "I". To understand this deeply and directly is to see things the way they really are, the practical repercussion of which is a complete cessation of egoistic grasping, attachment, and self-concern. Thus the forces which lead to continued rebirth come to an end, and thence ends, to quote the scriptures, "this complete mass of frustration, of suffering" (*dukkha*). (Williams 1989:3)

What we here see in the teachings of the Buddha is somewhat reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic passage cited above, in which clay is the reality and the clay pot "merely a verbal distinction, a name": there, like here, the things we deal with and talk about in daily life are said to be unreal, while the underlying reality is usually overlooked. This underlying reality is undivided being (or clay in the example) according to the Upaniṣad, and it is the components and conditioned factors of all things and living beings according to the Buddha.

While the Buddha is mainly interested in his message of the four 'Noble Truths' and is unwilling to develop a closed philosophical system, in the course of time the transmitters of his teaching are more and more drawn into theoretical and philosophical questions. This applies first of all to the authors of a set of texts called Abhidharma (or Abhidhamma in Pali), which contain lists of the basic elements in the Buddha's teaching, the *dharma*s. Since the Buddha is considered by his followers to be *sarvajña* "omniscient" or "all-knowing", the basic elements in his teaching were considered to be also the basic elements of reality. Thus, the soul or the person were certainly not true basic elements or *dharma*s. What, then, were the true basic elements of reality? Different opinions were held about this subject, but the lists as far as we know them included for instance the elements earth, water, fire, and air, as well as mental elements such as faith, suffering, etc. (Lamotte 1958: 659) An issue of debate among the different Abhidharma schools was the precise status of certain *dharma*s which were neither physical nor mental. These problematic *dharma*s included three which have a special bearing on language as an instrument of communication, viz.: *nāmakāya* "set of names", *padakāya* "set of phrases", and *vyañjanakāya* "set of syllables" (cf. Bronkhorst 1987:60–1). Vasubandhu, a famous Abhidharma teacher whose date is uncertain (4th or 5th century CE), was unwilling to accept these as separate entities in his list of the basic reals of the universe: "Name, phrase, and syllable are, by nature, speech or sound, and do not exist as discrete real entities. They, therefore, exist merely as provisional entities that are used to refer to specified arrangements of speech" (Cox 1995:168). Vasubandhu is criticized by a contemporaneous Abhidharma teacher,

Saṅghabhadra, who "offers arguments to support the existence of a non-vocalized, meaning bearing or object-referent-signifying unit—that is, name" (Cox 1995:168). By way of illustration we may mention one of Saṅghabhadra's arguments for accepting an independently existing meaning-bearing unit (which, in accordance with Buddhist doctrine, is impermanent, unlike the grammarian's *sphoṭa*): "there are cases in which an object-referent can be transmitted without dependence upon a complete segment of articulated speech: for example, if only a portion of the uttered syllables are heard as in the case of reading lips, and so on" (Cox 1995:168). Hence, meaning-bearing units independent of speech or sound are to be accepted.

The *dharma*s, the physical, mental as well as the neither physical nor mental ones, are all considered to be not unchanging and eternal but momentary. At the same time, they alone were considered to be *dravyasat* "substantially existing". The common illusion of 'unenlightened' people on account of which they perceive and deal with composite objects (persons, chariots, huts, etc.) is explained, more explicitly than in the discussions of the Buddha, by referring to language. These composite things are only *prajñaptisat* "nominally or conceptually existing" (Williams 1981). The term *prajñapti* is here of considerable interest. According to Warder (1971), it is to be interpreted as a "concept", but Williams argued that it is rather "the referent of a particular sort of name, that is one which does not have ultimate referents" (Williams 1981:3).

The problem in interpreting this term is illustrative of a fundamental feature which pervades most of the Buddhist epistemological literature, and which is of fundamental importance in any study of Buddhist (but often also non-Buddhist) contributions to semantics: "from the common Buddhist outlook we cannot really distinguish between an 'objective' and a 'subjective' world, we cannot really isolate 'facts' from judgments..." "This ambiguity is decisive in key words such as *artha* ("object" or "meaning"), *upalabdhi* ("exist" or "perceive"), *prapañca* ("the universe" or "language"), *satya* ("reality" or "truth") ..." "For this reason *prapañca* also means *our* expansion of the world, or, as one might say, the world presented to us in and by language" (Lindtner 1982:271 and 271, note 240).

With regard to the function of language in expressing meanings and not-ultimately-real objects, the earlier Buddhists mainly emphasized the function of names (Cox 1995:160; Bronkhorst 1996). It was only in Mahāyāna, a later development in Buddhism, that the relation between sentences and reality starts to come into the focus of extended critical investigations. This was

especially the case in the work of the important Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (ca. 2nd century CE).

In a well-known passage, Nāgārjuna investigates the expression that someone is going on a path, and he asks questions like the following:

> It is, to begin with, not a goer who is going, nor is it a non-goer; other than a goer or a non-goer, who is the third one who is going?
> *gantā na gacchati tāvad, agantā naiva gacchati* ¦
> *anyo gantur agantuś ca kas tṛtīyo hi gacchati* ¦¦ (*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* 2.8)

Nāgārjuna investigates all aspects of the going, the goer and the path on which he is going. What he finds, in verses like the one quoted, is that if the subject who is going is a goer, there are two actions of going, and if he is a non-goer there is contradiction. His final conclusion is: "Therefore, there is no going, no goer and nothing (i.e. no path) to be gone" (*tasmād gatiś ca gantā ca gantavyaṁ ca na vidyate*). What is important here is that it is somehow presupposed that each word in the sentence, the subject and the verb and the locus, should correspond to a reality. But if these realities corresponding to the words are confronted with each other, contradictions arise. Hence, the realities corresponding to the words (and to the sentences in which the words figure) are not ultimately real, have no *svabhāva* "own nature", as Nāgārjuna would say. Like the Abhidharma interpreters of the Buddha, Nāgārjuna denies the reality of the person, the self, etc. in spite of their functions in daily life and daily discourse. But unlike the Abhidharma-philosophers, Nāgārjuna does not stop his deconstruction of daily reality here. Using language as his tool, he demonstrates that the person and composite objects as well as the *dharma*s or basic elements of the world are equally *śūnya* "empty" in the sense that they have no independent being, since they are subjected to conditioned origination (cf. Lindtner 1982:18–29).

Other, less philosophical contributions of Buddhist authors relevant for semantics in the Sanskrit tradition were made in the fields of grammar (e.g. by Candragomin, referred to above) and lexicography. The founding father of a long tradition of lexicography, independent from the Nirukta which did not continue in a lively tradition, was the Buddhist Amarasiṁha, author of the *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* ("Instruction concerning nouns and genders"), which is also called the *Amarakoṣa* ("Dictionary of Amara"). His date is problematic (ca. 6th century CE?), his role in lexicography has been compared with that of Pāṇini in grammar (Vogel 1979:309). The *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* or *Amarakoṣa* is mainly a synonymic dictionary with articles grouped by subject.

9. Bhartṛhari's discussion of linguistic and semantic theories: major issues and parameters

Bhartṛhari, who became famous with his *Vākyapadīya*, has also been credited with another work, viz. the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* or "light on the *Mahābhāṣya*". It is a subcommentary on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (Great Commentary) on Pāṇini's grammar. Because it is the earliest commentary (partly) available on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* which has greatly influenced later major exponents of the Pāṇinian tradition like Kaiyaṭa and Nāgeśa, this text is of considerable importance. Unfortunately, the work is available only in a single, incomplete manuscript.

Bhartṛhari's interest in semantic and philosophical issues connected with Pāṇini's grammar is already manifest in the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā*. By way of illustration we may refer here to a passage in which Bhartṛhari enumerates three alternative theories of signification with which he was familiar (my interpretation is partly different from those offered by Joshi & Roodbergen 1986:18–22 and Bronkhorst 1987:43–4). The first view is stated as follows:

> Some think: The [word] which is uttered and has a sequence [of phonemes], the lower [word], [from that] some other [word], without sequence, the word-entity which resides in the mind, penetrates [the mind]. From that [word-entity in the mind] the meaning is understood. Why (i.e. why do we assume two words, a lower one which expresses the mental word and this mental word which is connected with the meaning)? Just as [a word] which is connected with one meaning does not express another meaning, so it cannot express [anything else] if it is connected with its own form (as the thing to be expressed).
> *kecin manyante ¦ yo vāyam uccāryate kramavān avaraḥ ¦ kaścid anyaḥ akramaḥ śabdātmā buddhistho vigāhate ¦ tasmād arthapratipattiḥ ¦ kutaḥ ¦ yathaivārthāntaranibandhano nārthāntaraṁ pratyāyayati evaṁ svarūpanibandhano notsahate pratyāyayitum* ¦ (*Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* 1:3.13–5)

This view can be represented in the following diagram:

(1) lower *śabda* → higher *śabda* → meaning

where the lower *śabda* is the sound-sequence or sequence of phonemes, and the higher *śabda* a mental element without sequential constituents.

The second view is stated as follows:

> Others think: just like in phonemes the quarters of phonemes reveal the phoneme type, in the same way, the phonemes, which in different sentences arise in succession and are not simultaneous, reveal that type of the [series of] phonemes that resides in the word. The word *vṛkṣa* [manifests] the type of [the series] *v-ṛ-k-ṣ-a*. From the type there is the understanding of meaning. And this (meaning) is the own form of the meaning

(and not the own form of the word, nor the type of the series *v-ṛ-k-ṣ-a,* which is understood from the sequential phonemes). The *sphoṭa* is that permanent word-entity. But those individual instances [the phonemes or series of phonemes] which arise in sequence and are not simultaneous are of the nature of audible sound (*dhvani*).
anye manyante ¦ yathā varṇeṣu varṇaturīyā bhāgā varṇajātiṁ vyañjayanti evaṁ varṇā vākyāntareṣu ye kramajanmānaḥ ayugapatkālās te tāṁ padasthāṁ varṇajātiṁ abhivyañjayanti ¦ vṛkṣaśabdo vṛkṣatvam ¦ jāter arthasya pratipattiḥ ¦ etac ca arthasvarūpaṁ sphoṭo 'yam eva śabdātmā nityaḥ ¦ ye tu kramajanmānaḥ ayugapatkālā, vyaktayo dhvanyātmānas te iti ¦ (*Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* 1:3.15–9)

Schematically, this view may be represented as follows:

(2) phonemes in a sequence → *sphoṭa* in the sense of a type of [a series of] phonemes → meaning.

The third view, finally, is stated as follows:

Others think: the word has two capacities. It is capable of revealing itself and of revealing its meaning; like a lamp which, while revealing itself, reveals the wealth in a treasury. But, in the sphere of a person, the light called *indriya* "organ of sense", does not reveal itself, (but) it reveals the outer object.
anye manyante ¦ dviśaktiḥ śabda ātmaprakāśane 'rthaprakāśane ca samarthaḥ ¦ yathā pradīpaḥ ātmānaṁ prakāśayan nidhyarthān prakāśayati ¦ yas tv ādhyātmikaḥ indriyākhyaḥ prakāśaḥ sa ātmānam aprakāśayan bāhyam arthaṁ prakāśayatīti ¦ (*Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* 1:3.19–21)

That this view is fundamentally different from the previous two views becomes clear if we represent it in schematic form:

(3) word → own form
word → thing-meant

Not only does this passage in the Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā show that different views on the processes of signification were adhered to in Bhartṛhari's time, it also illustrates Bhartṛhari's attitude towards these views: instead of arguing for a single valid view on the issue at hand, he takes different perspectives into account. Grammar as presented by Bhartṛhari is not a system of philosophy, but a discipline which in its basic notions and techniques should be compatible with the philosophical positions of the major schools of his time. While his close study of language and grammar in the Pāṇinian tradition brings him sometimes to theoretical decisions which are in opposition to the tenets of some of the schools, his general attitude is one of accommodation, as is clear from his own statement:

> For this discipline [of grammar] does not side with one single [thinker or group], [but is] common to all.
> *na hīdaṁ śāstram kasya cid ekasya sahāyabhūtaṁ sarvasādhāraṇam.*
> (*Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* 1.23.21)

Thus, an important doctrine in the Pāṇinian tradition is that *śabda*, *artha*, and *saṁbandha*, i.e. "word", "thing-meant" and their "relation", are *nitya* "permanent". Here, Bhartṛhari does not insist on an absolute permanence as was done by some Brahminical thinkers (esp. in the Mīmāṁsā-school), but he is able to interpret this permanence in such a way that it even suits the doctrine of the *kṣaṇika-vādin*s, the Buddhists who claim that everything is momentary and nothing eternal (*Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* 1:23.24).

9.1 The first book of the Vākyapadīya: introductory matter and the relation between sound, signifier and meaning

It is very clear, however, that Bhartṛhari's own background is a Brahminical one, and that, in his own way, he remains faithful to this background. His *magnum opus*, the Vākyapadīya, which consists of about 2000 verses divided over three books, starts with a reference to the beginning-and-end-less Brahman (the Upaniṣadic name for the all-encompassing and all-pervading reality), to the Veda (the sacred texts of the Brahmins), and to the dualist and monist philosophical systems of thought which arise from reflection on various passages in the Vedic literature (*Vākyapadīya* 1.1–10). Next, grammar is praised as being, among other things, nearest to Brahman and the first among the auxiliary Vedic disciplines (*Vākyapadīya* 1.11–22). After confirming that in grammer *śabda*, *artha*, and the relation between the two are traditionally considered to be permanent, and having enumerated eight topics of grammar and of the *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari discusses the relation between three major sources of reliable knowledge, viz. direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and *āgama* "tradition", or "traditional text" (comparable to *śabda* in the sense of "language (i.e., verbal testimony)" of the Nyāya-system). In particular, Bhartṛhari emphasizes the inadequacy of inference to reach reliable knowledge if used in isolation. Traditional knowledge precedes and cannot be set aside by inference. From some of his statements and from his way of arguing, it becomes clear that tradition for Bhartṛhari is not a monolithic entity: a number of traditional points of view have their own validity (cf. *Vākyapadīya* 1.8–10; 2.489–90 and Houben 1995b).

All these passages can be considered introductory to the central discussion

in the first book of the *Vākyapadīya* which starts in verse 44. In this verse, a distinction is made between two types of "basic words" (*upādānaśabda*):

> Experts recognise two *śabda*s, "words", among the basic *śabda*s: one is the cause of [other] *śabda*s, the other is employed in a [certain] meaning.
> *dvāv upādānaśabdeṣu śabdau śabdavido viduḥ* ¦
> *eko nimittaṁ śabdānām aparo 'rthe prayujyate* ¦¦ (*Vākyapadīya* 1.44)

Here, two words are distinguished, one that is "the cause of [other] words", and another which is "employed in a meaning". The one that is "the cause of [other] words" may be interpreted in the light of a subsequent verse which says:

> 47. Just as the fire which is within the churning sticks is the cause of the other fire [which is kindled], similarly, the *śabda* "word" which is in the mind [of the speaker] becomes the cause of the different audible words (*śruti*).
> *araṇiṣṭhaṁ yathā jyotiḥ prakāśāntarakāraṇam* ¦ *tadvac chabdo 'pi buddhisthaḥ śrutīnāṁ kāraṇaṁ pṛthak* ¦¦ (*Vākyapadīya* 1.47)

The word which is the cause of other words is, therefore, the mental *śabda* which is the cause of the audible words. On the other hand, the one which is "employed in a meaning", is the word as it is uttered to convey a meaning to the listener. Both the word which remains in the mind and the uttered word are, from different points of view, "basic words" (*upādāna-śabda*). The first one is basic (*upādāna*, in the sense of "basis, material") from the point of view of the speaker who pronounces a word or phrase; the other is basic in the sense that it is the immediate cause of the understanding of a meaning by a listener. The distinctions made in 1.44ab are of importance in the entire discussion up to *Vākyapadīya* 1.121. These are, first, the distinction between the level of sound or the audible word and the level of the signifier or the meaningful word; and, second, the distinction between the viewpoint of the speaker and that of the listener. In the discussion we recognize the three theories referred to in the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā*, and it seems that in the *Vākyapadīya* Bhartṛhari tries to integrate these in his own way.

The next passage (122–142) emphasizes that *śabda* "language" is all-pervasively present in man's thought and reality. The distinction between sequential sound and unitary signifier is suppressed here. But a third major factor is taken into account in this passage, apart from *śabda* "language" and *artha* "meaning, thing-meant", viz. *jñāna*, which is, in a general sense, "knowledge", and in a more concrete sense a "cognition". Some lines in this passage are as follows:

122ab. The capacity residing in words holds this whole universe together.
123. The difference between *ṣaḍja* [comparable to the musical note "do"] and the other [musical notes] is perceived [only] if it is explained by words; so all divisions of objects are based on the dimensions of words.
129. All knowledge of what to do in daily life depends upon words; and this [knowledge of what to do] is resorted to even by a (new-born) child whose dispositions are carried (over) from a previous (birth).
131. There is no cognition in the world that does not follow language. All knowledge appears as if permeated by words.
132. If understanding would give up its eternal character of language, the light [of consciousness] would no longer shine. For it is that [language-character of understanding] which produces comprehension.
134. That [language-character of understanding] functions as the external and internal awareness of living beings. The consciousness in all forms of existence does not go beyond the dimension of that [language-character of understanding].
141. The way a dimension of one's self or of something external is approached with a word, that way it becomes generally accepted. For it is by that (employed word) that the object is established.
122ab. *śabdeṣv evāśritā śaktir viśvasyāsya nibandhanī* ¦
123. *ṣaḍjādibhedaḥ śabdena vyākhyāto rūpyate yataḥ* ¦
tasmād arthavidhāḥ sarvāḥ śabdamātrāsu niśritāḥ ¦¦
129. *itikartavyatā loke sarvā śabdavyapāśrayā* ¦
yāṁ pūrvāhitasaṁskāro bālo 'pi pratipadyate ¦¦
131. *na so 'sti pratyayo loke yaḥ śabdānugamād ṛte* ¦
anuviddham iva jñānaṁ sarvaṁ śabdena bhāsate ¦¦
132. *vāgrūpatā ced utkramed avabodhasya śāśvatī* ¦
na prakāśaḥ prakāśeta sā hi pratyavamarśinī ¦¦
134. *saiṣā saṁsāriṇāṁ saṁjñā bahir antaś ca vartate* ¦
tanmātrām avyatikrāntaṁ caitanyaṁ sarvajātiṣu ¦¦
141. *svamātrā paramātrā vā śrutyā prakramyate yathā* ¦
tathaiva rūḍhatām eti tayā hy artho vidhīyate ¦¦

It may be noted that the threefold model adopted in this passage (*śabda-artha-jñāna*, or language-object-cognition) was much used by other thinkers, as e.g. in the *Yoga-Sūtra*.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* (ca. 2nd century CE, so probably preceding the *Vākyapadīya* with a century or two) points out that usually *śabda* "word", *pratyaya* "concept" (corresponding to Bhartṛhari's *jñāna*), and *artha* "object", are mixed up in our experience: "Word and object and concept are confused because they are erroneously identified with each other" (*śabdārthapratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt saṁkaraḥ*, *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.17, first part; tr. Woods). Also in the *Vākyapadīya*, it is observed that usually an intermingling of language-object-cognition takes place (as in 3.1.103), and it can be thought to underly some of the claims in *Vākyapadīya* 1.122–42. In addition, the

possibility that the three are not intermingled, and especially that cognition remains pure and unmixed with language and the form of the object, is recognized by Bhartṛhari as an exceptional situation which is not in the center of his attention as a grammarian (cf. *Vākyapadīya* 3.3.56).

After having discussed a few other topics in verses 143–74, Bhartṛhari concludes the first book of the *Vākyapadīya* with a discussion of correct and incorrect words (175–83). Apart from a few hints elsewhere, this is the only *Vākyapadīya* passage dealing with what we would consider 'languages other than Sanskrit'. However, Bhartṛhari—just like his predecessor Patañjali—presents them rather as groups of deviating, ungrammatical forms. He acknowledges that these ungrammatical forms may under certain circumstances (in circles where they are well-known) convey their meaning just as well as or even better than the corresponding grammatical forms, but holds that only the correct forms lead to *abhyudaya* "(social and religious) elevation" in addition (cf. *Vākyapadīya* 1.27 and 3.3.30).

9.2 The second book of the Vākyapadīya: on the primary unit in language

In an earlier section we have seen that Pāṇini's grammar focuses on a formal, analytic description of the language, but that it is presupposed that his basic units, verbal roots, noun stems and affixes, are meaningful. To say that the relation between *śabda* and *artha* is permanent is, therefore, a way to guarantee the continuity of the basic meaningful units. Yet, grammatical practice works with linguistic units which may (seem to) change or even give up their meanings in the course of the analytical or derivatory processes to which they are subjected. For instance, some affixes modify the meaning of a root or stem, others change the meaning entirely. There is a contrast between the presupposed permanence and the impermanence in grammatical practice of the relation between a particular linguistic unit and a meaning or thing-meant. The problem remained largely implicit in the *Mahābhāṣya*, but it attracted the attention of Bhartṛhari in the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā*. However, it is only in the *Vākyapadīya* that Bhartṛhari presents coherent solutions for this contrast by assuming that the real permanence is to be sought on the level of the sentence. For lower-level units such as words and affixes, this means that they do not have an absolutely permanent relation as isolated units, but only as parts of the sentence which is used by the speaker.

This problem is the main subject of the second book: in it Bhartṛhari carefully investigates the consequences of different views on the sentence.

The main parameter of the different views is whether the sentence or the word is primary. A crucial factor in judging the different theories is 'permanence' (of linguistic unit, meaning and relation). Semantic considerations play an important role because a major criterion for considering a linguistic unit either complex or unitary is whether the meaning understood from it is complex or unitary. The second book therefore also pays much attention to different views on the nature of sentence meaning and word meaning, and the relation between these, the words, and the sentence as a whole.

Before setting out to discuss the arguments in support of the various views on the sentence and on the word, Bhartṛhari mentions eight definitions of a sentence. It is these sentence definitions which will be elaborated, reformulated and evaluated, compared and contrasted, in the remainder of the second book. They are enumerated in *Vākyapadīya* 2.1–2 and may here be interpreted in accordance with the earliest complete commentary on the second book, viz. the one by Puṇyarāja (10th century CE ?): (1) the sentence is the verb (*ākhyātam*); (2) the sentence is a collection of words (*śabdasaṁghātaḥ*); (3) it is a universal residing in a collection (of words or sounds) (*jātiḥ saṁghātavartinī*); (4) it is a single partless linguistic unit (*eko 'navayavaḥ śabdaḥ*); (5) it is the sequence (*kramaḥ*); (6) it is a unification in the mind (*buddhyanusaṁhṛtiḥ*); (7) it is the first word (*padam ādyam*); (8) it is each word separately having expectancy for the others.

These definitions presuppose different views on the nature of sentence, word and their relation. If it is said that the verb is what makes a sentence a sentence (definition 1), the distinction between different words within a sentence (minimally the distinction between verbs and non-verbs) is presupposed. The implication of saying that a sentence is a collection of words (definition 2) is that words are the basic units and that the sentence is a secondary, derivative linguistic unit. These two definitions, therefore, attribute an independent status to the word. The definitions which presuppose that the sentence is in one way or the other the primary unit are 3, 4 and 6. The other views, 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8, presuppose divisions in one way or the other, and attribute a certain more or less independent status to the lower unit word.

The latter group of definitions can be subdivided further into those claiming that words first express a meaning of their own, after which these meanings are related in the sentence meaning (according to Puṇyarāja definitions 2 and 5); and those claiming that the words express a meaning which is related to the other word meanings in the sentence from the outset (definitions

1, 7 and 8). In later times, the former subgroup is referred to by the name *abhihitānvaya* which means "relating of the expressed", i.e.: "(what happens in a sentence is) the relating of (already) expressed (word meanings)". The second subgroup is called *anvitābhidhāna* which means "expression by the related", i.e.: "(what happens in a sentence is) the expression of (already) related (word meanings)". In the controversy between the 7th-century Mīmāṁsā-philosophers Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Prabhākara (see Section 5), the former adhered to the *abhihitānvaya*-view of the sentence meaning, and the latter to the *anvitābhidhāna*-view. Nyāya-thinkers generally adopted the *abhihitānvaya*-view.

While the theoretical distinctions at the basis of the later discussions between *abhihitānvaya* and *anvitābhidhāna* are already made clear in the Vākyapadīya, the main distinction in the Vākyapadīya is that between theories according a primary status to the word and those giving primacy to the sentence. In the course of the discussions following the enumeration of definitions, four types of arguments are presented which defend the primary status of the sentence (in accordance with definitions 3, 4 and 6 and varieties of these), and four arguments which defend the primary status of the word (in accordance with definitions 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 and varieties of these) (Houben 1995b). Although it is clear that Bhartṛhari ultimately prefers the sentence as the primary unit, it is remarkable that none of the arguments is presented as an argument which should absolutely convince the other party. Rather to the contrary. This is in accordance with the perspectivist attitude which Bhartṛhari evinces elsewhere (cf. 1995c:16–8), and it fits well his unwillingness to attribute a higher value to inference and logic than to tradition (as is clear from the verses on 'means of gaining knowledge' in the introductory passages of book 1 of the *Vākyapadīya*).

To illustrate the great variety of views on word and word meaning, and on sentence and sentence meaning, to which Bhartṛhari refers in the second book, we may refer here to 2.117–8:

2.117 Others declare that each *śabda* is the cause of a *pratibhā* "flash of understanding" through regular practice (*abhyāsa*), when something is expressed— also to children and animals—in accordance with the true meaning or with reality (*yathārtha*). 118 And this regular practice is considered by some to be *samaya* "convention" independent of traditional learning (*anāgamaḥ*). It shows: this should be done after this [word, utterance].

2.117 *abhyāsāt pratibhāhetuḥ sarvaḥ śabdo 'paraiḥ smṛtaḥ* ¦
bālānāṁ ca tiraścāṁ ca yathārthapratipādane ¦¦
118 *anāgamaś ca so 'bhyāsaḥ samayaḥ kaiś cid iṣyate* ¦
anantaram idaṁ kāryam asmād ity upadarśakaḥ ¦¦

In the second verse ("this … is considered by some") we may read a reference to the Vaiśeṣika view that the relation between word and meaning is not so much a matter of a (beginningless) tradition (as is the view of the Mīmāṁsā, and in a different way also of the grammarians) but rather a matter of convention (cf. Houben 1992).

In 2.117, it is not clear whether the word *pratibhā* "flash of understanding" refers to the understanding of a single word or a sentence; probably both possibilities are open. But Bhartṛhari has become most famous for his employment of this term with reference to the sentence meaning:

> 2.143 When the meanings (of the individual words) have been grasped separately, there arises another *pratibhā* "flash of understanding". This (other *pratibhā* "flash of understanding") which is brought about by the word meanings, they call the sentence meaning.
> *vicchedagrahaṇe 'rthānāṁ pratibhānyaiva jāyate* ¦
> *vākyārtha iti tām āhuḥ padārthair upapāditām* ¦¦

Next, it is emphasized how intimate and subtle this final step in the process of understanding the sentence meaning is:

> 2.144 This (*pratibhā* "flash of understanding") can in no way be explained to others [by saying] "it is this". Being established in a process within one self, it is not even (clearly) perceived by the subject (*kartrā,* i.e., by the one who has the flash of understanding).
> *idaṁ tad iti sānyeṣām anākhyeyā kathaṁ ca na* ¦
> *pratyātmavṛttisiddhā sā kartrāpi na nirūpyate* ¦¦

In the course of the discussion in the second book, several side issues are brought in which are of considerable interest from the point of view of semantic theory. It becomes clear that adopting either view on the primary unit of language has far-reaching consequences for these issues. Much attention is paid, for instance, to the problem of the primary and secondary meaning of words. If one adopts the view that the sentence is the primary unit, a sentence like "The inhabitant of the Vāhīka-country is an ox" and the sentence "Put the ox to the cart" are quite different sentences and the elements "ox" in each sentence are utterly distinct. Only if the word is accepted as an independent unit, can one say that "ox" is used in a secondary sense in the first sentence (to indicate properties of slowness or dullness in the inhabitant of the Vāhīka-country) and that it is used in its primary sense in the second sentence. The upholder of sentence primacy can, therefore, speak of the primary and secondary meaning or application of a word only in a very provisional way. On the level of the word, he perceives difference. The upholder of the word as the primary unit can maintain that it is the same word

used in different ways (*Vākyapadīya* 2.250–85; also 1.71–4).

Of interest is further the following comparison of words to tools to illustrate the fixedness of a word in its capacity to express a direct meaning, and its applicability in numerous contexts:

2.275 Just as a plough, a sword and a pestle, well-determined, having shape and capacity, are understood as accessories with regard to (certain) actions;
…
277 in the same way a word, originally well-established with a form and a capacity (to express a certain meaning), having a well-determined purpose, is applied to a different thing on account of its capacity (to express meaning).
2.275 *niyatāḥ sādhanatvena rūpaśaktisamanvitāḥ* ¦
yathā karmasu gamyante sīrāsimusalādayaḥ ¦¦
…
277 *tathaiva rūpaśaktibhyām utpattyā samavasthitaḥ* |
śabdo niyatatādarthyaḥ śaktyānyatra prayujyate ||

One may consider the difference between direct meaning and intended meaning also at the level of the complete sentence or utterance. Especially in the prescriptive parts of the sacred texts, it can be said in accordance with Mīmāṁsā that the intention of a passage in which something is praised is merely that the listener is exhorted to perform some action. Similarly, if a sacred text speaks of bad consequences of an action, this need not be interpreted literally:

2.321 Just as a child is kept away from something by telling it stories about tigers etc., in the same way (sacred texts) speak of some bad consequence even though it is not real.
vyāghrādivyapadeśena yathā bālo nivartyate ¦
asatyo 'pi tathā kaś cit pratyavāyo 'bhidhīyate ¦¦

Also in daily life the direct sense of an expression may be indicative of another one which is actually intended:

2.310 If there is an indication of time [in the expression] ''[We] should go, look at the sun'', [then] what is expressed through some means (i.e. indirectly) is: ''Be aware of the time''.
gantavyaṁ dṛśyatāṁ sūrya iti kālasya lakṣaṇe ¦
jñāyatāṁ kāla ity etat sopāyam abhidhīyate ¦¦

Both the upholder of the word and that of the sentence as the primary unit may have to take recourse to other factors than the mere form of the word in order to determine its meaning. A list of 14 of such factors (not all of which are entirely clear) is given in *Vākyapadīya* 2.315–6, and a shorter list is given in 2.314:

2.314 The meanings of words are analyzed, on the basis of the sentence, the context, the purpose, propriety, place and time, not on the basis of the form only.
vākyāt prakaraṇād arthād aucityād deśakālataḥ ¦
śabdārthāḥ pravibhajyante na rūpād eva kevalāt ¦¦

Although the precise definitions of these factors are not always entirely clear, they are all related to (aspects of) the linguistic and pragmatic context of the word and the utterance.

9.3 The third book of the Vākyapadīya: philosophical and semantic investigations of grammatical categories pertaining to the words in a sentence

In the second book a theoretical preference was evinced for regarding the sentence as the primary unit, but it also became clear that for the sake of analysis the word is a convenient and, in fact, indispensable unit. The third book further investigates this provisional but useful unit, the word, mainly on the basis of its meaning. The categories which are discussed are those which play a role in Pāṇini's grammar when it gives conditions for the application of grammatical operations. Already in Bhartṛhari's time, the nature of some of these categories were the subject of sharp controversies between different philosophical schools, and most of the controversies would extend over many centuries after the writing of the *Vākyapadīya*. However, although the sophistication of specific theories may increase in the course of time thanks to the contributions of later thinkers, it is difficult to find a later semantic theory which is not already present, at least in seed-form, in the *Vākyapadīya*.

There is, first of all, an issue with regard to word meaning which has far-reaching consequences for all other issues. The problem is whether a word expresses primarily the universal (i.e. a universal meaning, e.g. cowness as the primary meaning of the word "cow") or a particular substance (e.g. a specific cow, intended in the context of the utterance). The two positions are connected with the names of two pre-Kātyāyana grammarians, Vyāḍi and Vājapyāyana (cf. Raja 1969:75). This basic theoretical opposition is as important and as all-pervasive in the third book as the issue of the primary unit in language (word or sentence) in the second book. A fundamental parameter for the numerous semantic theories offered in the third book is whether the universal or the substance is considered the main meaning, or whether some intermediate position is held. Both the universal (*jāti*) and the particular substance (*dravya*) play a role in the semantic conditions for grammatical operations in Pāṇini's grammar, although Pāṇini, of course,

does not deal with the theoretical problem which interests Bhartṛhari.

On the view that the word expresses the universal, it is not so difficult to account for a permanent relation between a specific word and a specific meaning. But then one still has to account for the relation between the universal expressed by the word and the specific instance to which it applies in a certain context. On the other hand, on the view that the word expresses the particular instance, the problem of accounting for the relation between the word and the thing-meant is more acute. One way to solve it, is to postulate a 'secondary' or 'mental' existence of things. In that case, the word can have a direct relation only to the 'mental thing', not to the external thing because in that case one would run into considerable logical problems. This is clear from a number of passages in Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā*s, one of which was referred to above in Section 8. With regard to the daily functioning of language, Bhartṛhari's theory of the 'secondary' or 'mental' existence of things expressed by words, a theory which he presents in the chapter on *saṁbandha* "relation", provides a solution to the Nāgārjunian paradoxes.

However, as pointed out in the same chapter on *saṁbandha*, the way language functions in daily life need not correspond to the way things really are from an ultimate point of view (Houben 1995c). Bhartṛhari is well aware of different philosophical theories regarding what should be considered ultimately real. His own preference is clearly for an understanding of ultimate reality in terms of a 'non-dualism'. In this respect Bhartṛhari's understanding overlaps with that of Nāgārjuna and other Buddhist thinkers, as well as with the early Vedāntic passages in Brahminical texts like the Upaniṣads.

As for relation itself, Bhartṛhari holds that it does exist (though not as a categorizable entity), but cannot be expressed in language in accordance with its nature as a relation. This leads to a paradoxical situation (by saying that a relation is inexpressible, didn't it become expressible by the very word "inexpressible"?) for which Bhartṛhari provides a solution. In his solution, he also refers to and solves the so-called Liar-paradox ("everything I am saying is false") not just by precluding it (as Russell and others did when trying to establish a perfect formal language) but by showing how it works and why it usually creates no problems in daily life (cf. Barwise and Etchemendy 1987; Houben 1995a).

Other concepts and categories of Pāṇini's grammar discussed by Bhartṛhari in different chapters of the third book are: *guṇa* "attribute"; *diś* "direction"; *sādhana* "means" or *kāraka* "factor in an action" (with subsections devoted to each of the *kāraka*s); *kriyā* "action"; *kāla* "time"; *puruṣa* "person";

saṁkhyā "number"; *upagraha* "aspect (of a verb)"; and, finally, *liṅga* "gender". What is investigated, typically, for each of these notions is their ontological status in the light of different philosophies, and how they function in grammar. For instance, some accept the three times (past, present, future) to which Pāṇini refers to condition his grammatical operations, as substantially real, others as mental entities or as capacities. Bhartṛhari shows how all of these scholars, with their divergent philosophical commitments, can work with Pāṇini's grammar. In addition, a long chapter is devoted to complex formations (*vṛtti*); among other things, it deals with different types of comparison which condition certain affixes.

By way of illustration a few words may be said on Bhartṛhari's treatment of the semantic aspects of grammatical gender. The chapter devoted to this topic (the *liṅga-samuddeśa*, Vākyapadīya 3.13), mentions no less than seven views which are held with regard to the meaning of the three grammatical genders which are used in Sanskrit, viz. masculine, feminine and neuter. Three theories try to associate grammatical gender directly or indirectly with visible sexual characteristics such as breasts and hair. That such views are unsatisfactory for the grammarians was already pointed out by Patañjali (*Mahābhāṣya* 2:197.25–26), as they all lead to problems if one is to account for the gender of words denoting inanimate things.

This defect is avoided in two other theories (4 and 5), according to which the grammatical gender of words refers to either the conditions of the three *guṇa*s, or to these *guṇa*s themselves. The three *guṇa*s, in this context, are notions elaborated in Sāṁkhya, a philosophical system with roots in the early *Upaniṣad*s, which tries to give a cosmological and cosmogonic account of the universe. In this system, the whole universe is a transformation of primordial matter which consists of three *guṇa*s or "strands": *sattva* "purity", *rajas* "activity", and *tamas* "darkness". The three *guṇa*s are subject to three conditions of all things: manifestation, disappearance and continuity, and it is these three conditions which are indicated by the grammatical gender according to some: the masculine gender refers to manifestation (or increase), the feminine to disappearance (or decrease), the neuter to continuity. If this association is made, it can be said that all three genders and the conditions associated with them are present in each thing, and that it is a matter of choice of the speaker or the speech community which aspect is expressed in the word (*Vākyapadīya* 3.13.19–24). The advantage of this theory over the preceding ones is that it offers more possibilities for explaining the gender of words referring to inanimate objects; it is quite flexible in this respect (no doubt too

flexible to be convincing in a modern context), as can be illustrated with the following example, in which largeness is associated with the feminine (because what is very large can only decrease?), and smallness with increase and the masculine:

3.13.25 Snow (*hima*, masculine) and forest (*araṇya*, neuter) when associated with largeness have the feminine gender (thus, *himānī*, feminine, means "mass of snow"; *araṇyānī*, feminine, means "a large forest"); a house (*kuṭī*, feminine), qualified by smallness is connected with "increase" (and hence with the masculine gender: *kuṭīra*, masculine, means "a small house").
himāraṇye mahattvena yukte strītvam avasthitam ¦
hrasvopādhiviśiṣṭāyāḥ kuṭyāḥ prasavayogitā ¦¦

Two more theories are mentioned by Bhartṛhari. According to theory no. 6, grammatical gender in some cases corresponds to a visible characteristic, but is superimposed on the object in other cases, although it is in fact only an aspect of the grammatically correct formation of words. In the seventh theory it is emphasized that in Sanskrit even a mere thing can be referred to by a word in the neuter, feminine and masculine gender: the words *vastu* (n.), *vyakti* (f.), and *artha* (m.) have different genders but all refer to a 'thing'. This means that also in other cases gender is merely a matter of the correct formation of words, which does not even lead to the cognition of femininity etc. as in the preceding theory.

Although it is clear that Bhartṛhari considers the first three theories insufficient and that he prefers the theories in which grammatical gender is associated with the philosophical notions of the three *guṇa*s (following some hints of his predecessor Patañjali), the other two theories (6) and (7) are neither attacked nor rejected, but presented as quite acceptable alternative theories.

10. Developments after the Vākyapadīya: apoha "exclusion", poetics, theories of śābda-bodha "understanding from language"

Bhartṛhari was interpreted and criticized by a large number of authors belonging to different schools of thought. It seems that the Buddhist author Diṅnāga (5th-6th century) was one of the very few authors outside the circle of the grammarians who followed Bhartṛhari in his preference for the sentence as the main unit (cf. Hattori 1979; Hayes 1988:215f). With regard to the meanings of words, Diṅnāga developed his famous theory of *anyāpoha* "exclusion of the other" (or shorter: *apoha* "exclusion"). Although the theory is elaborated in a unique way by Diṅnāga in accordance with epistemological and ontological doctrines that were relatively well-established among Buddhist

thinkers, antecedents of Apoha can be found not only in earlier Buddhist works (cf. Hattori 1977), but also in theories referred to (and not rejected) by Bhartṛhari (e.g. *Vākyapadīya* 3.1.100–3), in a passage in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (Joshi & Roodbergen, 1986:171–2) and in aspects of the doctrine of Vyāḍi (Raja 1969:192–3).

Unlike Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṁsā thinkers, Diṅnāga, as a Buddhist, is unwilling to accept universals as real entities in his ontology. The sources of reliable knowledge recognized by him are direct perception and inference. What is real according to Diṅnāga are only particular things (*svalakṣaṇa* "proper characteristic") which exist not longer than a moment. These momentary particulars are accessible by pure perception: they produce, as it were, the "raw sense-data" not yet subjected to conceptualization. Inference, on the other hand, does not lead to a direct cognition of the particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*), but only to a cognition of a universal or class (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). To illustrate this in a simplified way with an example: The perception of smoke on a hill, leads one to infer an object, viz. fire, from which the smoke issues forth. However, on the basis of this inference, we do not have a specific cognition of a particular fire. What we know is that the object to be inferred is *not* earth, water, etc., which are known to possess no smoke. In other words, the object to be inferred is not anything that is not fire; it is not-not-fire. This way we both avoid saying that a particular fire is inferred (which is not the case) and saying that either the universal fire-ness or 'fire in general' (which are non-existent entities) is inferred. According to Diṅnāga, the same would apply to language: the word "cow" does not lead to the cognition of an objectively given universal 'cowness' (as held for instance by Mīmāṁsā-thinkers), but merely to the cognition 'not-not-cow' (cf. Hattori 1968:12). Language, therefore, cannot be considered (with Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā) to be a direct source of reliable knowledge of things that exist in reality. In the words of Dharmakīrti, Diṅnāga's successor in what has become known as the "Buddhist epistemological school":

> The thing that shines forth in the mind as the object of the speaker's functioning (i.e., of his speech), with regard to that *śabda* "language" is a *pramāṇa* "source of reliable knowledge"; [that *śabda* is a *pramāṇa* is] not dependent on the reality of a thing.
> *vaktṛvyāpāraviṣayo yo 'rtho buddhau prakāśate* ¦
> *prāmāṇyaṁ tatra śabdasya nārthatattvanibandhanam* ¦¦
> (*Pramāṇavārttika, Pramāṇasiddhi*-Chapter, 4)

Nevertheless, in logical proofs language does contribute—be it indirectly—to reliable knowledge, in that it leads to the cognition of a 'conceptual class'

(i.e. the 'exclusion of others') which in turn corresponds to the particulars which are real. In order to make this last step, Dharmakīrti makes use of a criterion to distinguish between a mere concept and an objectively given particular: only the latter can perform some *arthakriyā* "purposeful activity". Only a particular, real fire can give heat and cook a meal, not the concept fire.

Although Diṅnāga was the first to come with a comprehensive logical-semantic theory of Apoha, Dharmakīrti's version of it became the classical formulation, which was restated and commented upon by several generations of Buddhist authors and criticized by important Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā-thinkers. The importance of the logical semantics of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti is not so much that entirely new theoretical concepts are introduced (most concepts can be traced back to earlier authors), but rather that it is an integral part of an elaborate and sophisticated system of logic and epistemology which is based on a number of well-defined ontological presuppositions and precise definitions of basic concepts. Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti are mainly interested in the semantics of the words which express the basic terms in a logical inference, viz. nouns and adjectives. In logical theory, Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti contribute significantly to establishing formal criteria to judge the validity of an inference.

Further contributions to semantic issues are made by commentators on Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*. It can be said that in their commentaries grammar loses somewhat of its catholicity and is gradually transformed into a philosophical system with a set of doctrines which it defends against those of other systems. In this system of grammar, the development and defence of the *sphoṭa*-theory occupies an important place. The *sphoṭa*-theory was defended against the criticism of especially Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the influential Mīmāṁsā-teacher, by Maṇḍana Miśra (8th century), himself a follower of Mīmāṁsā, but also inspired by the *Vākyapadīya* and by Vedāntic works.

Independent semantic treatises in the grammarian's tradition were written by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (17th century) and Nāgeśa (17th-18th century). Unlike Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* (which is profusely cited), these works are clearly polemical, taking up for refutation the semantic views of especially Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā-thinkers (the Buddhists having become insignificant in India after about the 12th-13th century). Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's important work the *Vaiyākaraṇa-Bhūṣaṇa* (in a longer and shorter version), contains sections devoted to the semantics of different grammatical units: the meanings of verbal roots, those of verbal endings, those of nominal endings, those of nominal stems, those of compounds, the relation between linguistic item and

its meaning, the meanings of the negative particle *na*, etc. The work contains an important section on the *sphoṭa*-theory (Joshi 1967). The basic outlines of this theory, are already found in Bhartṛhari's works the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* and *Vākyapadīya* (cf. diagram 2, p. 111). In the developed theory, eight kinds of *sphoṭa* are recognized, which include a *varṇa-sphoṭa* (''phoneme-*sphoṭa*''), *pada-sphoṭa* (''word-*sphoṭa*'') and a *vākya-sphoṭa* (''sentence-*sphoṭa*). The sentence-*sphoṭa*, which expresses the indivisible sentence meaning, is considered basic to all other types of *sphoṭa*. (Sometimes larger units than the sentence are taken as a meaning-bearing element, e.g. whole literary works, but this takes us into the sphere of poetics rather than grammar.) Because the term *sphoṭa* is always taken to refer to a meaningful unit, the term *varṇa-sphoṭa* is understood not as a term for the phoneme, but for the smallest significant units, roots, affixes, etc., which may consist of one or a few phonemes. As such, this notion is closest to the modern notion of *morpheme* as the smallest significant linguistic unit (Cf. Joshi 1967:73–4). Apart from the section on *sphoṭa*, only a few other sections of the *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇa* have been translated into a modern Western language (Gune 1978; Deshpande1992).

Important developments take also place in the discipline of poetics. The discipline has earlier, pre-Bhartṛhari roots e.g. in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (before 4th century CE?). This text, an encyclopedic work dealing with all kinds of subjects related to dramaturgy, including music and poetry, presents itself as the 'fifth Veda', which, unlike the other Vedas, is accessible to all classes, including the Śūdras (the class of servants, labourers and artists). Well-known is the so-called *rasa*-theory according to which works of art (in this case dramas) lead to the experience of specific moods or *rasa*s. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* mentions eight such moods (among them the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), furious (*raudra*), heroic (*vīra*) and disgusting (*bībhatsa*) mood), and later on a ninth mood, the mood of peace (*śānta-rasa*) is added to the list. Of central importance in the treatises on poetics proper (starting with those by Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, both ca. 8th century) are the poetic embellishments (*alaṁkāra*s), often divided into embellishments based on the word (*śabdālaṅkāra*) and those based on the sense (*arthālaṁkāra*). The former include phenomena of alliteration etc., and the latter what the European tradition calls poetic figures. Although it is not possible to match all Sanskrit terms with European terms, a great number of the embellisments based on sense are in the sphere of metaphorical, allegorical, exaggerated expressions etc. As a general term ''to imply a selection of words and turning of ideas peculiar to poetry and abhor-

rent of matter-of-fact speech" Bhāmaha employed the term *vakrokti* "crooked expression". Apart from this, Daṇḍin recognized the *svabhāvokti* "expression of the own nature" as the first and basic embellishment (*ādyā alaṁkṛti*) (De 1960:2.48–9). Originally, the main purposes of poetry are said to be fame (*kīrti*) for the poet and pleasure (*prīti*) for the reader or listener (and spectator in the case of drama). Later authors such as Abhinavagupta (around 1000 CE, belonging to the religious-philosophical tradition of Kashmir Śaivism) present poetry as conducive to the experience of bliss (*ānanda*) and as contributive to liberation (De 1960:2.39–41).

An important theory of poetic expression is the *dhvani*-theory, modelled after the grammarian's theory of *sphoṭa.* The earliest name to be mentioned is Ānandavardhana, 9th century CE, author of the Dhvanyāloka (cf. Ingalls 1990). According to the developed grammarian's theory, the *dhvani*s "sounds" (or, in a slightly different perspective, the *varṇa*s "phonemes") which are sequential, manifest a sequenceless, unitary signifier called the *sphoṭa*, and it is only the latter which is directly related to the meaning to be expressed. The process of understanding language is thus a matter of revelation of what is basically already present in the mind of the listener. In slightly different terms than our earlier diagram 2 (p. 111), the process may be represented as follows:

Developed *sphoṭa*-theory:
sounds (*dhvani*) → unitary signifier (*sphoṭa*) → meaning (*artha*).

The meaning expressed this way is the direct meaning, and the function through which it is expressed is *abhidhā* "expression, the direct expressive function". Apart from this function, the philosophers of the different schools (Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya, grammar) hold that an expressive word can have another one: *lakṣaṇā,* "indication" (cf. Section 5, p. 83), which, becoming operative only when the *abhidhā* leads to insatisfactory results, expresses a secondary meaning. (In the work of some later authors in logic and poetics, *tātparya,* "what the speaker aims at" or "the purport or intention of a word or passage" is accepted as a separate function of words; according to others it is an extension of one of the two mentioned functions; cf. Raja 1969:213–24).

Now, according to the Dhvani-theorists, these two functions are not sufficient to explain the soul or essence of poetry (*kāvyasyātmā* "soul of poetry"). A text with words expressing direct and secondary meanings is still not a poem. One can speak of poetry only if the whole conglomerate of words, primary and secondary senses, suggests a deeper sense. This deeper sense

is called the "meaning to be manifested" (*vyaṅgya artha*) and the function through which poetical language manifests it is *vyañjanā* "suggestion". In this theory, the 'manifestor' which reveals this deeper sense is the poem, the conglomerate of words and meanings, and it is called *dhvani*. The deeper sense may be an idea, a figure of speech or an emotion (Raja 1969:284), and it is quite different in nature from the mere conglomerate of words and meanings, just as the *sphoṭa*, the unitary signifier of the grammarians, which is something quite different from the sequential sounds which manifest it. Thus, the *dhvani*-theory may be represented as follows:

Dhvani-theory:
conglomerate of words and (direct and indirect) meanings = *dhvani* → deeper sense.

In addition, the term *dhvani*, taken as the catch-word of this theory, is applied to the deeper sense (*vyaṅgya artha*) itself as well as to the function through which language manifests it (*vyañjanā*). The *dhvani*-theory allowed an integration from the point of view of poetics of earlier theories like the *rasa*-theory and the theory of poetic embellishments (*alaṁkāra*s), as in Maṁmata's mature work the *Kāvyaprakāśa*, 11th–12th century.

In the mean time, semantic issues continue to be of crucial importance in the discussions between different philosophical schools, not only those traditionally focussing on language, texts, and logic, but also more religiously and soteriologically oriented schools such as Vedānta. The formal categories in these discussions are, to an important extent, those established in grammar, and investigated, semantically and philosophically, in the Vākyapadīya. This is especially true for the discussions on *śābdabodha*, "verbal knowledge" or "understanding from language". It is the cognition which arises from linguistic input. The linguistic input should meet several conditions in order to give rise to *śābdabodha* (cf. Raja 1969:149–87). Three conditions, since long mentioned in the Mīmāṁsā, were accepted by all schools: the linguistic items should possess *ākāṅkṣā* "(syntactic and semantic) expectancy", *yogyatā* "suitability", i.e. "consistency of sense", and *āsatti* "proximity" (they should not be too far apart, or separated by other items). Sometimes a fourth condition is mentioned, viz. that the listener should have a general knowledge of the purport of the text (*tātparyajñāna*).

The precise definition and analysis of 'verbal knowledge' was an important issue for Nyāya-thinkers, as one of their major concerns was the delimitation of the four sources of reliable knowledge (*pramāṇa*s) accepted by them (see Section 7.2). Generations of Nyāya-philosophers, in a dialectical relation with various other schools, contributed to the theory of the *pramāṇa*s. A new era

in Nyāya-philosophy, viz. the era of Navya-Nyāya or "neo-logic", started in the early fourteenth century CE with the work of Gaṅgeśa. Gaṅgeśa's terminology is much more precise and sophisticated than ever before. As he makes extensive use of the syntactic properties of the Sanskrit language, the only way to demonstrate the accomplishments of Gaṅgeśa and his followers to those not familiar with the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar is to transpose the formulas of the Navya-Nyāya philosophers into the language of formal logic (cf. e.g. Ingalls 1951; Staal 1960; Matilal 1968).

The precise terminology developed in Navya-Nyāya was soon adopted and adapted by the thinkers of other schools, who used it to express and develop the basic concepts of the *pramāṇa*s according to their own doctrines. Important representatives of some major schools are Gadādhara (Navya-Nyāya), Khaṇḍadeva (Mīmāṁsā), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (grammar), and Dharmarāja (Advaita Vedānta), all belonging to the 17th century, and all accepting Pāṇini's formal system of language description as well as the argumentative style developed in Navya-Nyāya. An inkling of the sophistication of the ensuing discussions which follow between the thinkers of mainly Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya and grammar making use of the powerful technical terminology can be had from recent studies on *śābdabodha* like those by Jha (1986, Chapter 6) and Matilal (1988), on which the following brief and simplified account is based.

For the grammarian, the verbal knowledge arising from a sentence is an indivisible whole, an intuitive "flash of understanding" (*pratibhā*), which can be subdivided into words only secondarily. In this subdivision, however, of which it is accepted beforehand that it can be done in various ways, they take the verb as the main word. Other words are in one way or the other related to this main meaning-bearing element, the verb. This is in accordance with the way Pāṇini's grammar works with *kāraka*s "factors in an action" which are related in different ways to the *kriyā* "action" of the verb in the sentence. Hence, if the grammarians are urged to make explicit the way the meaning-elements are related in a divided sentence, they will take the verb meaning, which is a certain activity, as the central element around which all other elements are clustered. Suppose we have the following Sanskrit sentence (*vākya*):

V *rāmaḥ annaṁ pacati* "Rāma cooks rice".

If the grammarians are to give an analytic description of the verbal knowledge (*śābdabodha*) arising from (V), they would say something like the following (different and more detailed analyses are possible but to avoid too much complexity they are not resorted to here):

ŚB1 *vartamāna-kālīna-rāma-abhinna-kartṛka-anna-karmaka-pākaḥ*
It is the activity of cooking, taking place in the present time, having an agent which is identical with Rāma, having an object which is identical with rice.

This expression is based on the analysis of the sentence *rāmaḥ annaṁ pacati* into elements such as stem, root, affix, ending, and the attribution of well-defined meanings to each linguistic element. Also the type of relation can be indicated in precise terms (here: affix *-ka* "having"; *-abhinna-* "which is identical with"). The central element in this analysis is the meaning expressed by the verb *pacati*, or, to be more precise, the meaning of the verbal root *pac*, "to cook" i.e. "activity conducive to softening and moistening (of the thing cooked)". The verbal ending *(a)ti* indicates (among other things) that the activity takes place in the present time. The agent of the action is identical with the grammatical subject *rāmaḥ* (further analysable as *rāma* + *ḥ*), the object of the action is the grammatical object *annam* (further analysable as *anna* + *am*).

For the Mīmāṁsā-thinkers, as for the grammarians, the verb is the central element in a sentence. However, while the grammarians take the verbal root and the activity expressed by it as more important than the verbal ending and its meaning, to the Mīmāṁsā-thinkers it is the latter which is the more important. In accordance with their emphasis on the importance of Vedic injunctions, they hold that the basic meaning of all verbs is a "creative urge" (*bhāvanā*, from the causative of *bhū,* "to be, become") which stimulates action in accordance with the prescriptions. This basic creative urge is expressed—transmitted to the listener—by the verbal ending, not by the verbal root which merely qualifies this creative urge. This and some other considerations lead the Mīmāṁsakas to the acceptance of the following structural description of the verbal knowledge (ŚB) arising from sentence V (different Mīmāṁsā-descriptions are, again, possible):

ŚB2 *rāma-niṣṭha-kartṛtva-samānādhikaraṇā anna-karmikā vartamāna-kālīna-pākā-nukūla-bhāvanā.*
It is the creative urge which is conducive to cooking, taking place in the present time, having the same substratum as the agenthood residing in Rāma, having as object rice.

For the thinkers of Nyāya, it is not the verb which is the central element in the sentence but, generally speaking, the noun in the first ending (nominative). Hence, their description of the structure of the verbal knowledge arising from sentence V could be as follows (a great number of alternative descriptions of this and similar sentences have been proposed in the history of Nyāya):

ŚB3 *anna-niṣṭha-viklitti-janaka-pāka-anukūla-kṛti-mān rāmaḥ.*

It is Rāma who possesses the volitional effort conducive to cooking which produces the softening and moistening which is based in rice.

Underlying all descriptions is the presupposition that the main structural relation in the sentence is that between qualifier and thing to be qualified (*viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya*). The difference lies in the decision what is to be taken as the main thing to be qualified: for the grammarians it is the verbal root and its meaning, a specific action; for the Mīmāṁsaka it is the verbal ending and its meaning, the creative urge (*bhāvanā*); for the Nyāya-thinker it is the word in the first ending (nominative).

Most recently, the systems of knowledge representation in the Sanskrit tradition are receiving renewed interest from the side of those working in the field of artificial intelligence in computer applications. Also Pāṇini's grammar is being studied from the point of view of knowledge representation and artificial intelligence (cf. Bhate and Kak 1993). It seems that the initial enthousiasm and high expectations (triggered by a 1985 article by Briggs entitled "Knowledge Representation in Sanskrit and Artificial Intelligence") are now being toned down. The philosophical and doctrinal context of the traditional Sanskrit discussions and the pragmatic context of modern computer science are too far apart to justify expectations that the proposals made in the former may provide instant solutions in the latter. Nevertheless, it is to be admitted that there is some overlap in the attempts of Sanskrit authors and those concerned with artificial intelligence to give a clear, disambiguated, analytical representation of verbal knowledge and the semantic elements and relations figuring in it.

11. Conclusion

Semantic problems were studied in the Sanskrit tradition along all possible parameters: in the dimension of linguistic units (from phonemes, words, sentences, to elaborate literary works), in the dimension of ontological doctrines which try to answer the question 'what is real?' (attributing different degrees of reality to external objects, universals, mental entities, 'meanings of words' etc.), in the dimension of epistemological doctrines which try to answer the question 'what can we know?' (Epistemology, in this context, includes the study of logic and language as sources of reliable knowledge.) The viewpoint of the speaker and of the listener were taken into account, introspective 'psycho-linguistic' arguments were used, factors of linguistic and pragmatic context were analyzed, different types of speech utterances

(propositional statements, imperatives, poetic language) were studied, numerous theories and various systems of knowledge representation were developed, criticized and refined.

The earliest beginnings and attempts to solve semantic problems are largely lost. Even very early texts like the *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra* and Pāṇini's grammar clearly represent the sophisticated culminations of long traditions dealing with problems of language and meaning. Eight landmarks in the Sanskrit authors' concerns with semantic problems have been briefly discussed in this essay. In the Brāhmaṇa-texts, the Nirukta, and the Mīmāṁsā, authors try to attribute meaning to each and every element in the sacred tradition of texts and rituals. Meanings are found, created and attributed 'across the board'. The Brāhmaṇa-texts address the whole field of sacred texts and rituals, providing speculative comments, the Nirukta deals mainly with difficult Vedic words which are explained with the help of derivations from verbal roots, the Mīmāṁsā focuses on the interpretation of words and sentences in ritual prescriptions. It can be said that the wish to see meaning everywhere and the aversion to meaninglessness initiates the first attempts to deal with semantic problems in a systematic way, but it is not conducive to the development of very sophisticated semantic theories. The Mīmāṁsā-system does reach a high level of sophistication in its classical form, but is greatly indebted to the grammatical tradition in its linguistic analysis.

Important semantic insights arise from attempts by grammarians, especially Pāṇini, not to attribute but to exclude meanings from the word-forms which are central in his grammar. Pāṇini's formal description of Sanskrit provides a solid foundation for profound analyses and discussions of semantic issues in the ages to come. An important point is that Pāṇini's grammar is not primarily dealing with traditional, sacred texts any more, like the Brāhmaṇas, Nirukta and Mīmāṁsā, but makes the language of the well-educated the central object of his grammar. The relation between semantics and syntax in Pāṇini's grammar is an important issue in modern Pāṇini-research.

While Pāṇini creates clarity on the side of the formal description of language, the challenges of Buddhist and Jaina authors contribute to clarifications in the dimensions of the ontological and epistemological claims of Brahminical authors. In addition, the Buddhists and Jainas have their own text-traditions, and develop accompanying semantic, exegetic and grammatical traditions.

In Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* we find for the first time (among presently extant works) a comprehensive treatment of semantic issues along all possible

linguistic, ontological and epistemological parameters. Bhartṛhari discusses numerous theories of word, sentence, and their meanings, and investigates all major notions and categories in Pāṇini's grammar.

But after Bhartṛhari, no strong tradition focussing on semantic problems follows. Bhartṛhari influences other branches of learning such as poetics, and stimulates the reflection on semantic theories in different schools of thought. The Buddhist 'epistemological school' develops semantic theories in the context of an elaborate and sophisticated system of epistemology and (to an important extent formalized) logic. He also has his followers among the grammarians, who turn the semantic concerns of grammar into a system of doctrines touching on ontological and epistomological matters. Semantics in the Sanskrit tradition never becomes the well-defined domain of a separate discipline. Rather, it remained the battle-field *par excellence* for exegetes, logicians and grammarians with various backgrounds and philosophical commitments. What is at stake are mainly problems of the ontological and epistemological status of linguistic, semantic, and 'real-world' entities. Nevertheless, the polemics and discussions did lead to a number of important theories and concepts. In later times, thanks to the efforts of logicians and others, a sophisticated specialized language and terminology were developed in which semantic problems and theories of verbal understanding (*śābdabodha*) were discussed.

It is not easy to make an assessment of the achievements in the Sanskrit tradition regarding semantics and problems of linguistic meaning. One of the reasons, no doubt, is that, at least as far as the philosophical aspects of semantics are concerned, it is difficult to find a reliable platform of 'latest research' in modern Western philosophical semantics, on the basis of which such an assessment could be made (cf. the remarks Halbfass made with regard to ontology and the question of being in the Western and the ancient Indian tradition, Halbfass 1992:11).

The possibility to test knowledge representation systems in computer applications has added new, less philosophical and more pragmatic dimensions to modern studies in at least part of the field of semantics. It has provided a new 'sense of progress' to these studies, and at the same time new criteria to evaluate the achievements in the Sanskrit tradition. Although this re-evaluation has not yet led to any significant breakthroughs in computer applications, the appreciation of the achievements of the ancient authors has definitely increased. According to Staal,

> We can now assert, with the power of hindsight, that Indian linguists in the fifth century B.C. knew and understood more than Western linguists in the nineteenth century A.D.

> Can one not extend this conclusion and claim that it is probable that Indian linguists are still ahead of their Western colleagues and may continue to be so in the next century? Quite possibly; all we can say is that it is difficult to detect something that we have not already discovered ourselves. (Staal 1988:47)

If there is any area where we may expect to find the ancient Sanskrit authors (in the field of grammar and logic) to have been, with hindsight and at least in some respects, ahead of modern developments, it is in the field of semantic theory and the development of systems of knowledge representation.

12 Suggestions for further reading

1. For a general introduction to semantics in the Sanskrit tradition the first work to be mentioned is still Raja (1969). Valuable but partly antiquated are Chakravarti (1930 and 1933), and Gaurinath Sastri (1959). Short overviews can be found in Staal (1969) (emphasis on philosophical aspects of semantics) and Aklujkar (1970). Since all these introductions adopt an almost exclusively ahistorical approach the present contribution to *The emergence of semantics in four linguistic traditions* can be considered to complement these introductions by providing an historical outline of semantics in the Sanskrit tradition.

2. A very basic terminological model in the field of semantics, common ground for the different schools and disciplines, was provided in Section 2. Much more specialized terminologies evolved in most disciplines, notably in grammar (for which see Abhyankar & Shukla 1977), logic (Nyāya, Buddhist and Jaina) and Mīmāṁsā. An excellent introduction to the terminology and techniques of Navya-Nyāya ('neo-logic') is Ingalls (1951), which "provides precious material for anyone who wishes to study the functioning of language in the expression of logical structures or who wants to compare the relation between thought and expression in Indian and Western thought" (Staal 1960:70). On the highly specialized languages which were developed to express logical, mathematical and grammatical thought see further Staal (1995), and below under (10). For Mīmāṁsā terminology see Garge (1952) and Devasthali (1959 and 1991) referred to under (5) below; some of the Buddhist and Jaina linguistic and semantic terminology is discussed in the publications mentioned under (8).

3. Vedas and Brāhmaṇas: In a publication devoted to this subject, Gonda studied a great number of stylistic patterns (based on linguistic form, on sense, or on a combination) in the Veda, comparing them with parallel patterns in Latin, old Greek, Lithuanian, Malaysian and other languages (Gonda

1959; cf. also Gonda 1975:211–265). The first beginnings of a scientific or at least a systematic approach to language and reality in the exegetic context of the Brāhmaṇas were insightfully studied in Oldenberg (1919).

4. For further reading in Nirukta the reader may consult Sarup's edition and translation (see under primary sources, *Nirukta*); Rajavade (1939); Bronkhorst (1981a); and, most recently, Deeg (1995).

5. An overview of the semantic and exegetic concepts and techniques of Mīmāṁsā is given in Garge (1952). Useful though not always reliable is Devasthali (1959) (the revised second edition Devasthali 1991 is unfortunately not an improvement). Verpoorten (1987) provides an overview of Mīmāṁsā-literature with useful introductions to some major issues and concepts. A good attempt to understand the often abstruse arguments of Mīmāṁsā in the light of modern hermeneutic enterprises is Gächter (1983). On the problem of the universal or the particular as the word-meaning (with reference to Mīmāṁsā and other schools) see Scharf (1993) and Vattanky (1993).

6. Cardona's survey of research on Pāṇini and the Pāṇinian tradition (1976) is indispensable for any introductory or advanced study in this field, both because of the bibliographical information and because it contains excellent introductions to all major issues. Cardona (1989) is a more polemical sequel to this survey (cf. Kiparsky 1991). The first volume of what is to become a major handbook on Pāṇini is Cardona 1988. The kāraka-system, intermediary between the semantic and syntactic levels of Pāṇini's grammar, has been discussed by Kiparsky & Staal (1969), Deshpande (1990) and by Joshi & Roodbergen (1975). The latter work gives an annotated translation of the relevant discussion in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. A useful introduction to some major theoretical problems in Pāṇini's grammar is Kiparsky (1982; on the kāraka-system especially pp. 2–15, 44–51). Important semantic issues are discussed in the introductory section of Patañjali's commentary on Pāṇini: see Joshi & Roodbergen (1986).

7. General introductions to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (e.g. Potter 1977) deal with semantic theories mainly in the context of the study of language and perception as sources of valid knowledge. Since Faddegon (1918) (still a good first introduction to the Vaiśeṣika-system) some important new text-material has become available (cf. relevant sections in Matilal 1977 and Isaacson 1994) which awaits further study. Biardeau's study of the theory of knowledge and

the philosophy of language in classical Brahmanism (1964), though at some points in need of revision, contains valuable material and analyses concerning discussions on language and meaning in early Nyāya in relation to Mīmāṁsā and Bhartṛhari.

8. Studies in Buddhism and Jainism usually do not focus on theories of language and meaning. Some important contributions are Jaini (1959), Williams (1981), Cox (1995), and Bronkhorst (1996) for Buddhism, and Dundas (1996) for Jainism, which also contain further references. On Buddhist ways of dealing with problems of textual exegesis: Ruegg (1989). For the Buddhist epistemological school see below, Section 10.

9. The best general introduction to Bhartṛhari is still Iyer (1969), review by Biardeau (1975). Useful material is further provided by Aklujkar, Coward and Raja in the relevant sections of Coward & Raja (1990) (review by Bronkhorst 1992b). Recent studies and a fairly comprehensive bibliography are found in Bhate & Bronkhorst (1994). On Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language recently: Houben (1995c).

10. For Diṅnāga's ideas on word and sentence meaning see Hattori (1979), for his theory of knowledge (especially perceptual knowledge) Hattori (1968). An introduction to the Apoha-theory of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti is provided in van Bijlert (1992). Siderits (1985 and 1991) contain sections on Apoha and on other Indian linguistic-semantic theories (*abhihitānvaya* and *anvitābhidhāna*, see Section 9.2). Philosophical aspects of Dharmakīrti's epistemology are investigated in Vetter (1964). On Diṅnāga's logical and semantic theories see also Hayes (1988). An attempt to re-evaluate the relation between Diṅnāga, Dharmakīrti and Bhartṛhari is Herzberger (1986) (cf. reactions of Tillemans 1990:71 and Katsura 1991).

For those interested in the *sphoṭa*-theory as it developed in the grammarian's tradition, Joshi (1967) is essential reading. A vivid exposition of this theory (though not always sufficiently grounded in the Sanskrit sources) is presented in Coward (1980). The *Sphoṭa-siddhi* "Proof of the *sphoṭa*" of the Mīmāṁsaka Maṇḍana Miśra was translated by Iyer (1966). The arguments of different schools in discussions on linguistic and semantic problems in the classical and post-classical era are set forth in a masterly way in some works of Matilal (1971, 1985, 1986). How important problems of meaning are for Śaṅkara, the famous 8th-century Advaita Vedānta teacher who is usually studied from religious and philosophical perspectives, becomes clear in a comparative study of Panneerselvam (1993). The views on language as

an all-pervading creative principle as they are developed in the religious-philosophical tradition of Kashmir Śaivism are central in Padoux (1990).

Three important handbooks on poetics, De (1960), Kane (1971), and Gerow (1977), inevitably have to deal with the major semantic theories (including the *dhvani*-theory) in this discipline. A study devoted to highlighting the importance of the grammarians for poetics is Chakrabarti (1971).

On theories of the *śābdabodha* arising from sentences see Matilal (1988), Jha (1986 Chapter 6, and 1992) (all with an emphasis on the Navya-Nyāya viewpoint). On the *śābdabodha* arising from words according to the analysis of grammarians see Deshpande (1992:61–6). Valuable contributions to the study of the Navya-Nyāya theories of verbal cognition have been made by Bhatta with an annotated English rendering of Gadādhara's *Vyutpattivāda* and *Śaktivāda*, dealing respectively with the analysis and understanding of sentence meaning and with the expressive power of words (Bhatta 1990 and 1994).

For an impression of recent discussions on Sanskrit and knowledge representation systems in computer applications, cf. Bhate & Kak (1993), Rajan & Srinivasan (1993), Dash (1992), and some of the contributions in Bhatkar & Rege (1991).

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Part Three

THE GREEK TRADITION

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"Your brain is full of rotten-wool". "You mean cotton-wool," Sophie said. "What I mean and what I say is two different things", the BFG announced rather grandly.

Roald Dahl, The BFG, 1982; ch. "Snozzcumbers"

1. Introduction

From the earliest beginnings of their literature (ca. 800 BCE), the Greeks betray an awareness of the medium they are using to express themselves. Implicitly at first, but with increasing elaboration later on, they investigate the relationship between language and the world around us, and between language and thought. Beyond these first explorations, the context of the Greek *polis* or city-state saw the development of a theory of rhetoric, analysing the persuasive potential of discourse, and a poetics that focused on the psychagogic and didactic functions of language. Logic, instrumental to all scholarly and scientific activities, dealt with language from the point of view of validity and truth value. Moreover, as Greece developed from an oral to a (more) literate society, the philological study of (mainly poetic) texts became increasingly important. Although the communicative function of language was never lost from sight, and the problem of signification (often coupled with that of the essential nature of language) formed a central concern, no autonomous semantics, i.e. a theory of meaning without extra-linguistic concerns (see Leech 1981:4), ever developed. Since language was never supposed to be an end in itself, it did not get to be studied for its own sake until the hesitating emergence of 'technical grammar' in the 2nd/1st centuries BCE. Even in that period, however, the only specimens of 'technical grammar' are school grammars, which offer no more than a basic framework for quick reference and rehearsal: their content seems not to have been studied for its own sake but as an auxiliary to the study of the poets, itself a propaedeutic stage leading to the study of rhetoric.

However, this does not mean that the Greeks had no semantic theories; it just implies that the study of 'meaning' was taken up in different contexts

with specific requirements. Nonetheless, this resulted in a variety of purely linguistic insights, and the development of a quite specific semantic terminology (Section 2): initially, there was the instinctive concern to understand the world through the medium of the words or names denoting items in it. This concern was reflected in the practice of etymology, the attempt to grasp the complete meaning of a word, which will be discussed in Section 3. Interpreting 'words' and interpreting the spoken or written 'texts' of the gods (oracles, dreams) or of great authoritative poets of the past, are in a sense related activities. Some early exegetical techniques will be discussed in Section 4.

A number of fundamental issues to do with the nature of language were taken up in intellectual circles in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, discussed in Section 5. The debate focused on the question of language's reliability as a source of knowledge, its 'correctness'. Is there a natural connection between a thing and its name, or is language completely arbitrary and conventional?

Since Plato's (427–347 BCE) whole philosophy was ultimately based on his belief in fixed ethical norms, he had to take up the challenge posited by the relativist point of view held by some of the sophists. A total lack of stability in language would render it unsuitable as the vehicle of philosophical inquiry. On the other hand, Plato's commitment to the process of dialectics meant that he could not embrace the other extreme either. His dialectical method implied making use of words, not blindly relying on them as equivalents of a 'truth' they could not possibly contain. This dilemma produced the *Cratylus*, discussed in Section 6.

In his turn, Aristotle (384–322 BCE) took up questions of language and meaning in a number of different contexts, with Plato's work looming large in the background. Always focusing on the functions language was supposed to fulfil in different circumstances, he sketched an outline of a semantic theory that was to bear fruit for centuries to come. Clearly and apodictically he stated the difference between having meaning and being true, thus for the first time restricting the notion of semanticity to the purely linguistic level, no ontological or logical strings attached. Although anticipated by Plato, it was Aristotle's formulation of the principle that words do not signify things immediately, but only through the filter of the speaker's mind, that would be the major influence on medieval linguistic thought (Section 7).

Section 8 deals with the Hellenistic period (3rd/2nd centuries BCE), with the revolutionary logical work by the Stoics, and the theory of meaning developed by Epicurus. Intriguingly, linguistic notions are narrowly bound up with the ethical theories held by both schools. This period also saw the

spectacular rise of philology with the institution of the Alexandrian Museum. The skeletal remains of the work of Zenodotus (fl. ca. 284 BCE), Aristophanes (ca. 257–180 BCE) and Aristarchus (ca. 217–145 BCE) still provide fascinating glimpses of the nature of their exegetical work, but hardly any vestiges of truly semantic interests remain. As philology gained in popularity and intellectual prestige, it came to be adopted by specialists in other fields, primarily by doctors and philosophers, as a method of dealing with authoritative texts.

Section 9 is a discussion of the development of semantics as the basis for a syntactic theory in Apollonius Dyscolus.

Section 10 briefly focuses on a Latin author: in the work of Augustine (354–430) we find a theory of meaning originating in a blend of philosophical, linguistic and theological concerns.

Section 11 ends the main body of this essay with an overview of ancient theories of translation. It is followed by a conclusion (12), suggestions for further reading (13) and a list of bibliographical references (14). Since we are mainly interested in the emergence of semantics, most attention will be given to the early periods and the conditions for the development of theories of meaning.

2. Terminology

The main Greek verbs meaning "to mean" are *dēlóō/dēloũn* "to make clear", and *sēmaínō/sēmaínein* "to signify, to give a sign" (on these verbs plus derivatives see Manetti 1987:84). Neither is used exclusively to denote verbal or vocal signification. Any kind of sign may be indicated by them. In an early text like that of Heraclitus (5th century BCE) B 93, an opposition is felt between *légein* "to say", and *sēmaínein* "to signify" (contra Calboli 1992):

> "the lord who owns the oracle in Delphi does not speak, nor does he hide, but he signifies" (*ho ánax hoũ tò manteĩón esti tò en Delphoĩs, oúte légei oúte krúptei allà sēmaínei*, Heracl. Fr. B 93).

Sēmeĩon "sign" is formed from the same root *sēm-* that is also in *sēmaínō* "to signify"; it may be used for the formal aspects of a word (e.g. Plato *Crat.* 427c8 *sēmeĩón te kaì ónoma* "a sign and name"). The same goes for *sẽma* "sign", possibly used for a linguistic sign in Parmenides *Fragment* B 8.2. Conceptually related is the use of *súmbolon* "symbol", e.g. in Diodorus Siculus 1,8,1 (going back to the 5th-century philosopher Democritus): when the unarticulated and meaningless (*asḗmou*) stream of sound is articulated

and assigned fixed referents, i.e. when it is turned into symbols proper (*súmbola*), language becomes a recognizable instrument for communication. Aristotle, too, makes uses of the concept of the symbol to explain the relationship between (spoken) language and thought, and between spoken and written language: "The things that are in the voice are symbols of the affections in the soul, and written things are symbols of the things that are in the voice" (*Ésti mèn oũn tà en tẽĩ phōnẽĩ tõ̃n en tẽĩ psukhẽĩ pathēmátōn súmbola, kaì tà graphómena tõ̃n en tẽĩ phōnẽĩ, De Interpretatione* 16a3f.) (cf. *sēmeĩa*, "signs" 16a6; the words seem to be used interchangeably in this passage).

The Greeks have no separate expression for "to mean" as conveying the intention of the speaker (ex.: I mean A, not B); they use the verb *légein*, "to say". In later Greek, intention on the macro-level (intention of a text or a section of a text) may also be expressed by the noun *skopós*, "mark, goal".

As a noun, "meaning" is most frequently *tò dēloúmenon* "that which is made clear", or *tò sēmainómenon* "that which is signified". Both are substantivized passive participles from the verbs mentioned above. The corresponding active participles are *tò dēloũn* "that which makes clear", and *tò sēmaĩnon* "that which signifies". They are used to refer to the form of the word (as opposed to its content or meaning). This formal or sound aspect is also indicated by *phōnḗ* "(articulated) voice", which is unrelated to the idea of "sign". On the other hand, it has a specific link with linguistics (viz. vocal sound) which the others lack. Plato's *Cratylus* also features a different verbal noun from the root *dēlo-*, viz. *dḗlōma* "a means of making clear, that which makes clear, indication", possibly selected because it is linked with the similarly formed *mímēma* "imitation" (423b6; cf. 433b2; 433d1; 435a2). *Dḗlōma* "a means of making known, indication" is also used in Plato's *Sophist*, where two kinds of "vocal indications of being" (*tõ̃n tẽĩ phōnẽĩ perì tẽn ousían dēlōmátōn*) are distinguished: names and verbs/predicates. A predicate (*rhẽma*) is taken as the indication (*dḗlōma*) which relates to actions, a name is the vocal sign (*sēmeĩon tẽ̃s phōnẽ̃s*, obviously meant as a synonym of *dḗlōma* here) applied to those who perform the action in question. Instead of *dḗlōma*, Epicurus and his school use *dḗlōsis*, "indication", a nomen actionis from the same root *dēlo-*. An alternative for "meaning" from the root *sēm(a)-* is *sēmasía* (e.g. Chrysippus *apud* Galen *On the Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates* 2.5.15, p. 130,24 DeLacy; Scholia on Dionysius Thrax 516.2ff.; 616.13–27). A third Greek verb meaning "to show" is *phaínō*: its compound *emphaínō* "to give to understand", and the substantive *émphasis* "meaning, significance" are usually employed to indicate the extra informa-

tion that is conveyed by an expression, over and above its lexical meaning (see e.g. Quintilian 8.3.83).

The use of the verb *dúnasthai* ("to be able, strong enough to") in the sense of "to be equivalent to, to mean" is first attested in Herodotus *Histories* 4.110 "The Scyths call the Amazons 'Oiorpata'; that name means (*dúnatai*) men-killers in Greek. For they call a man 'oior' and 'pata' is to kill" (*tàs dè Amazónas kaléousi hoi Skúthai Oiórpata, dúnatai dè tò ónoma toũto katà Helláda glō̃ssan androktónoi; oĩor gàr kaléousi ándra, tò dè patà kteínein*). The substantive *dúnamis* "power, ability, meaning" is used in connection with letters, syllables, rhythms and harmonies by the sophist Hippias (Fr. A 11), and in the *Cratylus* 394b-c it stands for a name's value, reflecting the essence of the thing the name refers to.

Apart from these words from the verbal roots *dēlo-* "to make clear", *sēm(a(i)n)-* "to indicate", *pha(i)n-* "to show", and *dúnasthai* "to be equivalent to", words connected with 'mental processes' also come to be used as technical terminology for the semantic level of language. Their connotation is completely different from the group of words related to "signaling, sign-giving". Signs can refer directly to an element from reality, words like *diánoia* "thought, intention", and *énnoia* "reflection, notion, conception"; hence: "sense of a word", add a psychological or intentional level: a word is the vehicle of a 'thought', either of a speaker, or in the abstract. The 'thought' of the word is its meaning. *Diánoia* and *énnoia* are related to the Greek word for "mind", *noũs* (itself used as "meaning" in Dionysius Thrax, *Tekhnē* 6.8). *Diánoia* "thought, intention" features e.g. in Plato's *Cratylus* 418a7: "they change the meanings of the names", *alloioũsi tàs tō̃n onomátōn dianoías*, cf. *ibid*. 418c9 "the intention of the namegiver", *tḕn diánoian toũ theménou*. *Énnoia* "reflection, notion, conception; hence: sense of a word", becomes one of the common words to signify "meaning" in later Greek. In the 2nd-century-CE grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, it is used for all the conceptual aspects of a word, its semantic and syntactic values (Sluiter 1990:97). But it also occurs in the historian Dio Cassius (2nd/3rd century CE):

> [Verus showed exceptional strength of character:] "This led Hadrian to apply to the young man the name 'Verissimus' ["Truest"], thus playing upon the meaning (*énnoia*) of the Latin word" (*aph' hoũ kaì Ouēríssimon autón, pròs tḕn toũ Rhōmaïkoũ rhḗmatos énnoian kompseuómenos, apekálei*, Dio Cassius *Roman History* 69.21 [tr. Cary]).

According to the 1st-century-BCE literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus, we signify (*sēmaínomen*) our thoughts (*noḗseis*) by speech (*léxis*) (*On Literary Composition* 3).

Form-meaning and form-referent oppositions can be expressed in a variety of ways, as the following scheme shows (cf. Ax 1982):

Form	Meaning	Referent
ónoma		*prãgma*
psóphos	*sēmainómenon*	
léxis	*lógos*	
léxis	*énnoia*	
léxis	*nóēsis*	
léxis/phōnḗ/ sēmaĩnon	*lektón/prãgma/ sēmainómenon ?prólēpsis*	*tunkhánon*

The oldest combination is *ónoma* "name" and *prãgma* "(extra-linguistic) thing". A typical combination of terminology can be found in the *Cratylus* once again: "It is completely irrelevant whether there is a letter extra, or one missing, as long as the essence of the thing (*prãgma*) which is made clear in the name (*ónoma*) is valid" (*oud' ei próskeitaí ti grámma ḕ aphēírētai, oudèn oudè toũto, héōs àn enkratḕs ẽĩ hē ousía toũ prágmatos dēlouménē en tōĩ onómati*, *Crat.* 393d2ff.).

In his *Rhetoric* III,2.1405b8, Aristotle opposes the effects reached "in the sounds" (*en psóphois*) to those "in the meaning" ((*en*) *tōĩ sēmainoménōi*).

The Stoics oppose *léxis* "string of sounds" (regarded from the formal side) to *lógos*, "meaningful speech". In rhetorical theory *léxis* is coupled with *énnoia* (as "diction" versus "thought", e.g. in Hermogenes *On the Qualities of Style* 2.4). *Léxis* in later Greek comes to mean "word", a more general alternative for *ónoma* "name", and *rhẽma*, "word, verb (predicate)". In a grammatical context *lógos* develops into "complete utterance, sentence".

The Stoics add another lexical element from the root *lég-/lóg-* "to speak, speech": *Tò lektón* "the sayable, that which can be said, that which is said" comes to stand for the incorporeal meaning, mediating between the corporeal word-form (*léxis*, *phōnḗ*, *sēmaĩnon*) and the referent in reality (*tò tunkhánon*, probably intended originally as "that which has the quality signified (by the noun)", or maybe "that which gets a case/name"; later felt as "something which happens to be there". *Lektón* is more specific than *sēmainómenon*. It is the meaning in so far as it can be uttered in speech. This complicated notion will be discussed in Section 8. In Stoic theory, *prãgma* "thing", acquires a completely different status. It does not refer to extra-linguistic reality, but signifies the (incorporeal) content of a *lektón*. Thus, *lektón* and

prãgma come to be complementary; both refer to the incorporeal meaning, but the one stresses its language-related aspect, the other its reality-related side. In technical grammar *prãgma* is associated especially with the meaning of verbs.

The closest equivalent to a concept of 'meaning' contributed by Epicurus (341–270 BCE) and his school seems to be the notion of *prólēpsis* "preconception, common notion", which mediates between words and things. However, the term itself does not belong to the semantic field of 'meaning'.

The Latin terminology corresponds closely to the Greek. Meaning is expressed by verbs meaning "to show": *ostendere* and *significare* (e.g. Varro *On the Latin Language* 5.3). Substantives derived from *significare* are *significatio* (e.g. Varro *ibid.* 9.40; Seneca *Letters* 89.17 (opposed to *vox* (= *phōnḗ*) and to *verba* respectively)) and *significatus* (e.g. the title of M. Verrius Flaccus' (1st centuries BCE/CE) lexicographical work *De significatu verborum* "On the meaning of words"). Other derivations from *significare* "to mean, to signify", are *significabilis* and *significans* "capable of conveying meaning, significant".

As the Greek can use *dúnamis* and *dúnasthai*, Latin has *vis* "force, meaning" and *valere* "to be equivalent to, to mean". And Latin also uses words derived from the semantic field of thought processes/perception to indicate meaning: *sensus* (e.g. Ovid *Fasti* 5.484; Quintilian 6.3.48 *verba duos sensus significantia* "words with two meanings"). In a rhetorical context *sententia* "meaning" is opposed to the "letter" of a law or other written document.

The form-meaning opposition is expressed by couples like *vox* / *forma* / *verbum* / *nomen* / *vocabulum*—*res*; *forma*—*res*; *facies*—*vis* (Seneca *Letters* 9.2.3); *vox*—*significatio* etc.

Augustine forms *dicibile* on the model of *lektón*, but this term never enjoyed much popularity.

3. Folk linguistics, etymology, magic: the meaning of names

Archaic Greece was an oral society. This means that the community was kept together by oral communication and that orally transmitted tradition lay at the basis of all functions and institutions. Oral and literate societies differ significantly in the ways they address the natural human need for points of orientation in past and present. Oral tradition fulfils the role that written record does in a literate society, but it is a completely different medium, because of its flexibility and the absence of any fixed form. Every time a story

is retold, it is in fact created anew. The important role of poets in such a society has attracted a lot of scholarly attention over the last two decades. They embody the collective memory, and thus the history, of the group, and their role is to a large extent that of visionary teachers of the people. Their poetry provides or preserves the points of reference necessary to strengthen feelings of group identity and of orientation in the world. While dealing with events from the past, one of its main functions is to help people understand the *status quo*.

Various strategies for acquiring such a sense of control over the present can be recognized in early Greek poetry. Its very medium, language itself, formed an obvious starting-point. Being traditional itself, it was thought to contain clues as to how the world worked. Names could generate myths (cf. Kraus 1987:18; Leclerc 1993:271). For example, the story about an earth-born people may have originated in the word *laoí* "people", which was felt to be somehow associated in meaning with *lãas* "stone". The myth then explains how once upon a time a people of men was born from the stones buried in the earth, and it was corroborated by the similarity of names—which probably triggered the story in the first place. The same may go for the name Penelope, which derives from *pēnélops* "duck", but was connected with *pḗnē* "woof" and *lṓpē* "robe, mantle": here, either the name may have generated the myth of the heroine who spun a robe by day and undid her work by night, or the other way around: the myth was there and a suitable name for its protagonist was devised (Peradotto 1990: 107–108). Mythology—sometimes combined with etymology—is one of the strategies to gain control over the present. The same goes for (mythical) genealogy, especially the ones that eventually produce a god or hero as the ultimate forebear, a fixed and stable point of reference if ever there was one (cf. Thomas 1989; Leclerc 1993:258). Etymology came in because an understanding of names was taken to imply an understanding of the corresponding realities.

This same presupposition explains certain magical practices in which names and things named do not essentially differ from each other (Kraus 1987:19f.). It is also apparent in the common folktale motif of hiding one's real name: allowing somebody to know your name means giving him power over your person (cf. Odysseus' trick of introducing himself to the Cyclops as "No-body" (*Odyssey* 9.366). When Romulus founded the city of Rome, he allegedly invented three names for it, a "political" one (namely "*Roma*", "Strength"), a sacerdotal one ("*Flora*", "flourishing"), and a mystical one that could only be used by priests and should never be divulged to the people.

One priest who did so anyway was put to death. The secret name was "Love", *Amor*, the inversion of *Roma* (Joh. Lydus, *On the Months*, 125.2ff. Wuensch).

There is a lot of implicit, and some explicit, linguistic thought in Homer (8th century BCE) and Hesiod (around 700 BCE), although the two are not in the same class in this respect: Hesiod is far more self-conscious as a poet; and the attention he pays to problems of meaning is related to the didactic nature of his work. Both poets know that names—the most important objects for etymologizing by far throughout Antiquity—can be significant. The word they use to designate such a name is "eponym(ous)" (*epṓnumos*), used for a name in so far as it relates to something else. Thus, in the *Odyssey* it is told how his maternal grandfather gave Odysseus his name:

> "My daughter's husband and my daugher, give him whatsoever name I say. Lo, inasmuch as I am come hither as one that has been angered (*odussámenos*) with many, both men and women, over the fruitful earth, therefore let the name by which the child is named be Odysseus" (*Gambròs emòs thugátēr te, títhesth' ónom' hótti ken eípō:/polloĩsin gàr egṓ ge odussámenos tód' hikánō,/andrásin ēdè gunaixìn anà khthóna poulubóteiran;/tōĩ d'Oduseùs ónom' éstō epṓnumon*, *Odyssey* 19.406ff., tr. Murray).

"Odysseus" was felt to be linked with *odússomai* "to be wroth against", and it reflected his grandfather's attitude to the world; but it turned out to be relevant to Odysseus' unenviable personal fate as well, the fate of someone hated by gods and men. This seems to be implied in Athena's question to Zeus:

> "Wherefore then didst thou conceive such wrath (*ōdúsao*) against him, O Zeus?" (*tí nú hoi tóson ōdúsao, Zeũ?*, *Odyssey* 1.62, tr. Murray).

In the same passage, Homer hints at a connection between "Odysseus" and *odúromai* "to lament". The one association does not exclude the other.

There are many instances of etymologizing in Homer. Especially the cases where someone or something has more than one name, make it obvious to look for meaning in the extra name:

> "Him, Hector called Skamandrios, but the rest called him Astyanax (ruler of the city). For Hector was the only protector of Troy" (*tón rh' Héktōr kaléeske Skamándrion, autàr hoi álloi/Astuánakt': oĩos gàr erúeto Ílion Héktōr*, *Iliad* 6.402f.).

In this example, Hector has called his son after Troy's main river, the Skamander, and the other Trojans have found a name for the young prince that not only honours his father, but also expresses their hopes that Astyanax will take over his father's role as Troy's champion. The etymology gives *rhúomai* "to protect" as a variant on *-anax* "ruler", while *Astú-* "city" stands for *Ílios* "Troy".

Other cases of double names are caused by the fact that men and gods use different names. One would expect the names of the gods to be especially 'truthful', but they are either entirely opaque or their relevance is unclear; the poet knows them, and communicates them to us, but we do not understand them. Examples are *Iliad* 1.403f., where the gods' name for the giant with hundred arms is Briareos, while its human name is Aegaeon; and *Iliad* 20.74 where a river is called Xanthos "blond" by the gods and Skamander by men.

Hesiod also used "eponym(ous)" for significant names (e.g. in *Theogony* 280ff. in the explanations of the names Pegasus and Chrysaor), and both poets introduce etymologies with the phrase "eponymous (significant) because ..." (*epṓnumon hoúneka*):

> "And they were surnamed 'Cyclopes' (Orb-eyed) because one orbed eye was set in their foreheads" (*Kúklōpes d'ónom' ẽsan epṓnumon, hoúnek' ára spheōn/kukloterȅs ophthalmòs héeis enékeito metṓpōi*, Hesiod *Theogony* 144f., tr. Evelyn-White; cf. Homer *Iliad* 9.562).

Later, the "eponyms" were to be adopted by grammatical theory as a special class of nouns. The *Tékhnē grammatikḗ* ascribed to Dionysius Thrax (2nd century BCE) defines it as follows:

> "An eponym, also called dionym ("double name") is a name that is applied to one subject together with another proper name, as e.g. Poseidon is also called "Enosíkhthōn" ("Earth-shaker") and Apollo "Phoebus" ("the shining one")" (*Epṓnumon dé estin, hò kaì diṓnumon kaleĩtai, tò meth' hetérou kuríou kath' henòs legómenon, hōs Enosíkhthōn ho Poseidȭn kaì Phoĩbos ho Apóllōn*, 38.3).

By that time, eponyms were 'nicknames', or name-epithets, with an obvious meaning that related to the nature of the person (god) named. The prefix *ep-* was apparently taken to mean 'extra'; a name that is 'added to' the regular one. In its earliest usage, where *epṓnumon* "eponym" serves to modify *ónoma* "name", the term itself is not very perspicuous. It seems to bear overtones of "being related to (a quality)", or of "to the point", "fitting".

Our first attestation of the word *etētúmōs* "truthfully, in accordance with truth" (cf. etymo-logy), to indicate the 'appropriateness' of a name is in the *Agamemnon*, a tragedy by Aeschylus (525/4–456 BCE); there, it is asked about Helen:

> "Who gave her so very true a name?" (*tís pot' ōnómazen hõd' es tò pãn etētúmōs*?, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 681f.).

Helen's name was found fitting, because it was associated with the root *hel-* (cf. *hairéō*) "to destroy": Helen destroyed ships and men; she was *helénaus*,

"ship-destroying". As a synonym for *etētúmōs* "truthfully", "fittingly" *prepóntōs* is used in verse 687. There are many more examples from tragedy of significant names (e.g. Ajax, associated with "crying aiai, wailing" (*aiázein*, Sophocles *Ajax* 430ff.; cf. Pentheus—*pénthos* "grief, sorrow", Eteocles "truly famous", Polyneikes "of many quarrels").

The word "etymology" (or at least the corresponding adjective) appears to have been coined by the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus (3rd century BCE) (two works *On Etymology* are listed in his bibliography, Diogenes Laertius 7.200), but the practice it denotes was ubiquitous in Greek literature, both before and after him. The word is strikingly absent from Plato's *Cratylus*.

Leclerc (1993) suggests that the great concentration of etymologies in the earlier part of Hesiod's *Theogony* is meant to be an illustration of the ease with which man could grasp reality in the time before they were separated from the company of the gods, by Prometheus' treacherous division of the first sacrificial victim. This would reflect the belief in the status of names as a source of power or danger. The dangerous side may be illustrated by the reluctance to use the names of dangerous gods, which were preferably replaced with euphemistic ones:

> "I hesitate to call the 'Benevolent Goddesses' by name" … "I know the goddesses you meant. I do not want to name them" (*onomázein gàr aidoũmai theàs eumenídas; oĩd' hàs élexas. onomásai d'ou boúlomai*, Euripides *Orestes* 37f.; 409).

Eumenids, "Benevolent Ones", is the euphemistic name for the Furies, the divine revengers, a name best avoided lest those formidable powers be aroused by it (cf. Van der Horst 1994:3ff.).

As there was a link between eponymy and etymology, so is there between euphemism and etymology. In fact, euphemism is a very reasonable explanation for a phenomenon that has been an endless subject of derision, the ancient etymologizing technique that derives a word from the opposite of its meaning, with the famous example

> *lucus a non lucendo* "a sacred wood (*lucus*) is called after the fact that there is no light there (*non lucendo*) (Quintilianus 1.6.34; Augustinus *De dialectica* 6; *De doctrina christiana* III,29.41; Martianus Capella IV,360; Herbermann 1991:364, n. 45).

The awe-inspiring nature of the power named made people look for an inoffensive way of indicating what they meant without inadvertently activating its anger by using its real name.

Again, later grammatical terminology preserves a remainder of the belief in the power of names. Jocelyn (1979:136, n. 218) discusses the term for a

name or noun used in its proper sense, *kúrion* (in the combination *ónoma kúrion*), first attested in this technical usage in Aristotle (e.g. *Rhetoric* III,2.1405b; *Poetics* 21.1457b; 22.1458a19 etc.). The casual way in which Aristotle uses it, makes it likely that he did not coin it (as do the implications of the word). *Kúrios* means "having power or authority over"; when applied to inanimate things, it indicates something with special power or effect. What then about *kúria onómata* "proper (valid) names"?

> "Such names were thought of as owning the things they signified, like occupiers with a title to their lands and movable goods, and possessing the reliability associated in the ancient world with ownership. Horace's *verbum dominans* [*Ars Poetica* 234] expressed the concept exactly. The regular Latin term, however, *verbum proprium* ... put the relationship the other way about with the thing signified owning the word (cf. the Greek *onómata oikeĩa tõn pragmátōn* ["the proper names of the things"] ([Aristotle] *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1438a34f." (Jocelyn 1979:136, n. 218).

This section started with some early ideas underlying etymology. In origin it was without any doubt a phenomenon that belonged in folk-linguistics, but it also played a role in later exchanges between intellectuals, notably philosophers and philologists. As one of the six tasks of grammar (see e.g. the opening section of Dionysius Thrax *Tékhnē grammatikḗ*), it was helpful to establish the meaning and orthography of obscure poetic words, but it never turned into a mainstream activity of grammar with its own theory. Rather, it was part of the general intellectual paradigm, a legitimate way to underpin an argument, or to illustrate a point. Basically every change in the form of a word would be acceptable, as long as there remained a vague similarity between the word in question and the names or sentences adduced to explain it. A felicitous link on the semantic level was all-important.

Apart from the many instances of etymology in ancient literature at large, and especially in works of a linguistic nature, our three main sources for ancient etymology are Plato (427–347 BCE) in his *Cratylus*, Varro (116–27 BCE) in his *De lingua Latina* "On the Latin Language" and Augustine's (354–430 CE) *De dialectica*. It is striking how little change or development in the actual techniques can be found between the three of them.

Herbermann (1991) rightly stresses the fact that in antiquity etymology was never motivated by historical interests. Its purpose was primarily better to understand the reasons for giving a concept its name, and therefore, to motivate a meaning which the concept supposedly was carrying all the while. A preconceived notion of what the meaning actually is, usually underlies the proposed etymology:

> "Es handelt sich um die Frage nach dem Grund der Benennungsbeziehung eines bestimmten lexikalischen Ausdrucks zu einem bestimmten Inhalt oder Gegenstand, und die Begründung dieser Beziehung durch bestimmte Arten der Bezugnahme auf andere Ausdrücke derselben Sprache sowie deren Inhalt bzw. Denotata" (Herbermann 1991:366).

In this sense etymology is never used to *find* the meaning of a word (unless perhaps where a philologist tries to establish the meaning of a now obscure poeticism), but only to corroborate it. Meaning is supposed to be the constant factor, no matter what happens to the word-form. This principle was first expounded by Socrates in Plato's *Cratylus* (393d1f.; 394b2ff.; see below, Section 6), and it was to guide ancient etymological practice throughout. It fitted in especially well with the principles of the Stoics who held that only a word-form could act or be acted upon (because it is a 'body', namely battered air), while meaning is something incorporeal, which therefore remains unaffected (see Section 8). The grammarian Trypho (1st century BCE) idiosyncratically held the view that meaning could actually influence the form of a word, and vice versa (as in *hēmikúklion* "half circle", where the first part of the compound, *hēmi-*, is itself half of the word for "half", *hēmisu-*). Usually, however, etymology's basic contribution is to a synchronic understanding of language, and through language, of the world.

The absence of a historical interest also explains why it was possible to give several etymologies for one name, as when, for example, Socrates gives four different explanation of the name Apollo, based on the four areas in which the activities of that god were thought to reside: he is the god of medicine and ritual purification, and his name duly reflects that he is "cleansing and redeeming from evil" *apoloúōn te kaì apolúōn tõn … kakõn*, *Cratylus* 405b. He is the god of divination and in that capacity deals in truth and simplicity (*tò alēthés te kaì tò haploũn*), which yields the name *Háploun*, and hence, Apollo (405c). He is also the god of archery and always hits his target. Thus, his name is *Aeibállōn*, "ever-darting", and hence, Apollo. And, finally, he is the god of music, astronomy and harmony: this means that he makes things "move together", either the poles of heaven (*pólous*), or in musical harmony. As "together" is *homoũ* or *a*, Apollo is "he who causes to move together", *Homopolõn* (405c). The extra lambda is inserted in order to avoid associations with "to destroy utterly" (*apol-/apōl-*; unfortunately the present infinitive of the same verb does have two lambda's (*apollúnai*)). The removal of this unwanted association—which detracts from the essence of the god—is the ethical motivation behind the whole operation (405e).

All four derivations of the name are obviously meant to be true simulta-

neously. They are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Together they present the full range of meanings that Apollo had in Greek society. These meanings are not learned from the name, but the name functions as a kind of repository or archive from which they may be retrieved: although it would be rash to lump Plato together with representatives of an archaic cosmology, I submit that he has preserved a trace here of how etymology could be used as a strategy to understand the present better.

Both the use of etymologies and the possibility of combinations of simultaneously valid etymologies proved to be very long-lived. For example, when Theophilus, a Christian from the 2nd century CE, explains the 'names' or titles of God, he gives a double derivation for the word God (*theós*) itself:

> "He is called God (*theós*) because he bases (*tetheikénai*) the world on his own stability, *and* because he runs (*théein*): and running is racing, moving, being active, nourishing, taking care, governing, and making everything alive" (*theòs dè légetai dià tò tetheikénai tà pánta epì tēĩ heautoũ asphaleíai, kaì dià tò théein: tò dè théein estìn tò trékhein, kaì kineĩn, kaì energeĩn, kaì tréphein, kaì pronoeĩn, kaì kubernãn, kaì zōopoieĩn tà pánta*, Theophilus *Against Autolycus* I,4).

The second of these etymologies is taken straight from the *Cratylus* (397d). For the connection with the verb *tithénai*, see Herodotus *Histories* 2.52, who connects "gods" (*theoús*) with "setting in order" (*kósmōi théntes*).

Obviously, etymology also lends itself to comical distortions, and the comedian Aristophanes (5th century BCE) was quick to avail himself of the opportunity: thunder is no more than a heavenly fart, as is obvious from the names:

> "That is why their names are similar, too, *brontḗ* (thunder) and *pordḗ* (fart)" (*taũt' ára kaì tōnómat' allḗloin, brontḕ kaì pordḗ, homoíō*, Aristophanes *Clouds* 394).

This takes us back to folk-linguistics (i.c. punning), but the difference with 'serious' etymologies lies in the intention of the author only. Even Plato, who gives a sharp critique of the value of etymology in the *Cratylus* makes use of the possibilities of assonance to suggest meaningful links between words like: *anoḗtous/amuḗtous* "stupid"/"not initiated (in the Mysteries)" (*Phaedo* 80d); *Haídou/aídes* "Hades' place (the underworld)"/ "invisible" (*Phaedo* 81 c-d, in spite of *Cratylus* 403a; 404ab); *sõma/sẽma* "body"/ "tomb" (*Gorgias* 493a1ff., the connection goes back to Orphic doctrine, cf. *Cratylus* 400b/c) and *píthos/pithanós* "jar/impressionable (*Gorgias* 493a6, explaining that someone gave the name "jar" to the part of the soul that contains the appetites "as being so impressionable and persuadable" (*dià tò pithanón te kaì peistikón*, tr. Lamb).

The ancient authors most consistently resisting the indiscriminate use of etymology are Aristotle (384–322 BCE) and Galen (2nd century CE). The former only accords it the value of an *auctoritas* argument, because an etymology represents the 'true' view of reality of the earliest Greeks (cf. e.g. Aristotle *On the Soul* 1.2 405b26ff.). Galen equally rejects the epistemological value of etymology and its use as a heuristic device (in his *On the Views of Plato and Hippocrates*, see DeLacy 1966).

In this section, etymology turned out to be a common strategy by which especially an oral society tries to get a sense of control over the world. As such it was connected with mythology and genealogy. Names were held to convey information about the essence of a thing, the sort of information you would not want to give an enemy access to. Ancient etymology appears in the context of folk-linguistics, but is also a constant factor in intellectual discourse. Multiple explanations of a name can be simultaneously valid and collaborate to give a complete picture of the concept named. The supposed changes in the word-forms are not ruled by any firm laws, except for the fact that the semantic value of the word, through all its changes, must be constant.

4. Pre-Alexandrian exegesis (6th–4th centuries BCE)

Manetti (1987) locates the origins of ancient semiotics in divination, medicine (prognosis), and writing. Trying to find out the will of the gods, the Greeks, like the people from Mesopotamia, 'read' the signs, verbal and otherwise that were thought to stem from divine powers. The gap dividing men from gods implied that the signs were bound to be obscure and in need of interpretation (Manetti 1987:27ff.). In this context, we will focus on the exegesis of the linguistic sign. In fact, the earliest attestations of the very words *exḗgēsis* "explanation, interpretation" and its corresponding verb *exēgéomai* "to expound, interpret" point towards these same areas. Functionaries called *exēgētaí* "interpreters" stood guard over Attic sacred rites and customs that were orally transmitted. These Attic interpreters put down their 'interpretations' in writing from the 4th century BCE onwards. *Exēgētḗs* is used in Herodotus of interpreters of oracles, dreams and omens (e.g. *Histories* 1.78). In *Histories* 2.49 he states that it was Melampous "who {introduced and explained} (*exēgēsámenos*) the name, sacrifice and phallic procession of Dionysus" (*Melámpous esti ho exēgēsámenos toũ Dionúsou tó te oúnoma kaì tḕn thusíēn kaì tḕn pompḕn toũ phalloũ*). *Exēgeĩsthai* means that he introduced them to these new rites and taught them how to use them, but it

also seems to carry overtones of explanation, especially when compared to the *Histories* 2.50 on the Egyptian origin of the Greek names of the gods (cf. also 4.36.2). Exegesis of Homer is expressed by the verb *exēgeĩsthai* "to interpret", e.g. Plato *Cratylus* 407a; *Ion* 531a. Another area where exegesis came to be practised was philosophy: Zeno of Elea (fl. 464/1 BCE) allegedly wrote an *Exḗgēsis tõn Empedokléous* "Exegesis of the works of Empedocles", and Heracleides Ponticus (ca. 390–310 BCE) wrote four books of *Hērakleítou exēgḗseis* "interpretations of Heraclitus".

Manetti (1987:53ff.) illustrates the rhetorical or dialectical process through which the results of oracular consultation was translated into a concrete policy for the *polis* with the well-known example of the oracle on the 'wooden walls' from Herodotus. But this passage (*Histories* 7.140ff.) is also revealing for its exegetical techniques and the quite sophisticated, if implicit, ideas on 'meaning'. Moreover, it shows how exegetical techniques were made subordinate to an ulterior (in this case political) goal.

Faced with the threat of a massive Persian attack (480 BCE), the Athenians dispatched envoys to the oracle at Delphi. The answer (which they had taken down in writing, *sungrapsámenoi* 7.142) seemed to leave very little hope: the only glimmer of light offered by the oracle was the protection to be offered by "a wood-built wall". The oracle ended with the verses:

> "Salamis, isle divine! 'tis writ that children of women
> Thou shalt destroy one day, in the season of seed-time or harvest" (*õ theíē Salamís, apoleĩs dè sù tékna gunaikõn/ḗ pou skidnaménēs Dēmḗteros ḕ sunioúsēs*, *Histories* 7.141, tr. Godley).

Back in Athens the oracle is discussed in the Assembly. A group of elders suggested the oracle was referring to the Acropolis, which had originally been fenced in by a thorn hedge (the "wood-built wall"): they proposed to give Athens up to the enemy and to withdraw on the Acropolis. A second group thought the "wood-built wall" signified (*semaínein*, 7.142) a naval force of wooden ships. But this group was confounded by the last two verses which seemed to announce a terrible defeat in a sea-battle near the little island of Salamis.

From a semantic point of view, it is striking that no one opts for a literal interpretation. The literal meaning of "a wood-built wall" is clear. What is disputed is the *intention* of the oracle. The exegesis of the elders requires a kind of synecdoche: the wood-built wall that once upon a time fenced in the Acropolis now stands for the Acropolis as a whole. The other party takes the words metaphorically: a "wood-built wall" refers to a protective device

made of wood. Both parties are aware of the fact that what one says and what one means do not stand in a one-to-one correspondence.

At this point of his story Herodotus first introduces the great Athenian statesman Themistocles. As becomes evident later (7.144), Themistocles had advocated the building of a fleet before, and he had suggested that the Athenians use the silver from the mines of Laurium for this purpose. So, clearly, Themistocles is committed to defending the second 'reading' of the oracle: this means he must offer an interpretation of the last two verses that removes the threat of a naval defeat for the Athenians. Themistocles realizes that the oracle is ambiguous: "children of women" can refer to the Persians as well as to the Greeks. Ambiguity is a regular characteristic of oracles and one of the reasons why they are always right. We may compare the oracle given to Croesus (purporting that a great empire would fall if he attacked. He duly attacked, not realizing that his own empire was meant (*Histories* 1.54)). Themistocles exploits this ambiguity and points out that the qualification "divine" for the isle of Salamis sits oddly with a defeat of the Greeks. In that case, the oracle would surely have called Salamis "wretched". Therefore, says Themistocles, the "children of women" are the Persians, not the Greeks; the Greeks will be victorious in the naval battle, and the "wood-built wall" means the fleet.

It is clear that Themistocles starts his interpretation from a preconceived notion of what is to be the most fruitful policy for the Athenians. His exegesis serves a rhetorical (persuasive) and political end, and indeed, it betrays a considerable degree of sophistication. Although this is not made explicit, Themistocles requires consistency in the emotional impact of the two halves of the problematic verse: you cannot say in one breath: "*Divine* Salamis, you will *destroy us*", which is what the alternative interpretation of the words "children of women" would boil down to. "Children of women" is ambiguous, "divine" is not (or so Themistocles claims); therefore, "divine" must be the starting-point of the interpretation and "children of women" must be explained accordingly. The possibility that the oracle might be pro-Persian or neutral is not taken into consideration. The former would enable it to call the island "divine" while still alluding to the defeat of the Athenians, the latter to call the island "divine" irrespective of what happens in its environment. All that matters in this context is that the apparent threat of the oracle is dissolved, and that is where the interpretation will stop. Exegesis is not practised for its own sake.

Not only in interpreting the will of the gods, whether expressed in dreams

or in oracles, did the Greeks need exegesis. The original function of the poets in an oral society, to be the preservers of the tribal past and the living explanation of the *status quo*, was not over and done with when Greece gradually evolved into a (more) literate society (from the 7th century BCE onwards). The poets remained all-important as the educators of youth, and the teachers of society at large. Their work was not only disseminated through performance, it also constituted an important part of the school curriculum. But since the chronological gap between their language and social background and that of their students was continually widening, an effort of interpretation was necessary in order to make their work accessible and to maintain its relevance to the new historical circumstances. In the period before the foundation of the Museum in Alexandria (6th-4th centuries BCE), three exegetical techniques are especially relevant to our present theme of semantics: glosses, paraphrase, and allegory.

Glosses are "difficult words" from Homer, for which Attic equivalents had to be found. Real "glossography" emerged only in the 3rd century, but on a less institutionalized basis the practice was much older. The rhapsodes, who performed Homer's poetry, were also supposed to be able to explain his words. Democritus (5th century BCE) wrote about glosses in Homer, and Aristotle (4th century BCE) uses the term as a matter of course.

An example of paraphrastic technique is Plato's *Republic* (II,392cff.); in this text Socrates remedies the baneful influence of direct speech in poetry, which forces the reader completely to identify with the emotions of a character. Socrates' solution is to *report* such speech in a prose paraphrase. The paraphrastic technique is likely to reflect a familiar school practice.

In view of the authority attributed to the poets, it was important to have them on your side in any argument. This means that exegesis was often used with ulterior motives, to support a certain view. Plato again offers an example in his *Protagoras*, where Socrates' paraphrase of a poem by Simonides turns that poet into a Socratic *avant la lettre*. Clearly, the exegesis has a rhetorical (or dialectical) function, but at the same time it exhibits considerable philological sophistication (e.g., Socrates uses different antonyms to the same terms to bring about a shift in the argument). Plato does not leave it at this, however. His Socrates rejects the interpretation of poems as a legitimate way of conducting a discussion. The poets cannot be questioned nor can they answer back. This means that there is an element of arbitrariness in asserting that the poet means or intends (*noeĩn*) this or the other (347e); it can never be proven or disproved. In other words: using the poets is incompatible with

dialectics. The same rejection of the authority of the poets can be seen in the *Ion* and in the so-called aporetic dialogues, where the interlocutors look for definitions of moral values. One of the definitions proposed in the course of the discussion (only to be rejected as unsatisfactory) always stems from a poet. It is typical of Plato to take up such generally accepted discussion techniques (using the poets, using language and etymology) only to dismiss them as improper tools for a dialectician: epistemologically, they are of strictly limited value. I will return to this matter in Section 6, on the *Cratylus*.

Finding support for one's view in the poets, especially in Homer and Hesiod, sometimes required a huge interpretive effort. When the surface meaning of the text failed to produce the required testimony, its true meaning was searched for below the surface. In a sense, the poetic text took on the characteristics of an oracle. The deeper sense, or *hupónoia*, "under-sense", is hidden (like the true meaning of an oracle) and should be retrieved from the text by reading it *allegorically*. Allegory was often backed up by etymology (Buffière 1956:60ff.). Plato already knew of (possibly quite extensive) allegorical readings of Homer. He was prepared to admit that Homer's message might be relevant and respectable on such an interpretation, but he felt one could not leave it to children to gather such hidden boons from the text, and therefore he rejected the poets as educators of the Greek (*Republic* II,378 d).

The first allegorical interpretations of Homer took the gods as allegories for physical phenomena, reading the *Iliad* as a kind of cosmogony (Theagenes of Rhegium, 6th century BCE). They were positive in character, trying to turn Homer into a very early witness for cosmological and philosophical insights that were made explicit only later on (e.g. by the originators of the allegorical interpretation themselves). But there was also an apologetic stream of allegorical interpretation, that tried to explain away offensive bits of Homer (like the gods' adulteries, or lies), often by invoking ethical allegories (in which e.g. the gods represent virtues). This was a reaction to the criticism of philosophers like Xenophanes (6th century BCE) directed at Homer's representation of the gods. Ethical and physical allegory were to remain the major species of this type of interpretation, the former practiced mainly by rhetoricians, the latter by philosophers and theologians. The Stoa was to become especially famous (or notorious) for it.

Hupónoia "under-sense" was the earliest term for allegory. The word *allēgoría* "to say other (than that which is meant)" is of later date. It stems from a grammatical/rhetorical context, i.e. a context that is primarily didactic

and prescriptive: *allēgoréō* "to say other (than that which is meant)", is what the producer of a text does; only secondarily can it refer to a method of reading or explaining a text (see Whitman 1987:263–68; Buffière 1956:45ff.). The term *hupónoia* is neutral where the opposition intended/unintentional deeper meaning is concerned.

Allegory is not the only rhetorical trope in which what is said and what is meant do not coincide: the same goes for tropes like metaphor and irony. Allegorical interpretation became especially important in Jewish and Christian exegesis of the Bible and in the Neoplatonists.

5. The intellectuals' debate in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE: On language, truth, knowledge and reality

The intellectuals of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE regarded Homer and Hesiod as the first Greek intellectuals, and they regarded themselves as (critical) heirs to the poetic tradition. Philosophers, poets, doctors, sophists and politicians (groups often difficult to distinguish, because most of the individuals involved belong to more than one category) took up position against their predecessors in the polemical and antagonistic way characteristic of intellectual discourse of the period. Hence, interestingly, the poets' outlook came to some extent to determine the questions that were discussed. The poetic interest in language, in the trustworthiness of names, and the implicit observations made in that connection became part of the general scholarly 'database', a common body of knowledge, to be dealt with by every self-respecting scholar. This helps to explain why even in the context of early Ionian 'natural philosophy' questions pertaining to the nature of language were inevitably taken up. Although their interest was not primarily linguistic, scholars were concerned with the relationship between language, truth, knowledge and reality, in the footsteps of the poets.

The issue that lay at the heart of scholarly interests in this period was the nature of our world: how did it originate and what were its principles, its ultimate constituents? Another question concerned the value of our sense-perceptions: is the world in a state of eternal flux, or, quite to the contrary, is change just an illusion? Widely diverging opinions on each of these issues were aired, in a process of continuous reevaluation and reinterpretation of the 'common data-base' mentioned above, and it is in this context that the contribution of language to our state of knowledge was being weighed. However, this does not mean that the philosophers involved engaged in a

proper 'philosophy of language'. Their goals lay elsewhere.

Heraclitus (fl. ca. 500 BCE) "the dark philosopher" (*ho skoteinós*) emphatically takes up position against the poets: in his view the world is based on a substrate of fire, which is involved in a continuous process of change (or strife, as he prefers to call it). Strife between opposites creates the temporarily harmonious states that we think we observe. Over and beyond matter (fire) and the change processes there is the Logos, or Reason, which governs our cosmos. In view of this cosmology, Homer was completely misguided when he wished away strife from between gods and men (*Iliad* 18.107; Heraclitus *Fragment* A 22). And because opposites are essentially one, Hesiod was equally wrong when he called "Day" a child of "Night" (*Fragment* B 57). The same polemical tone is clear from *Fragment* B 40, for example:

> "Much learning does not teach one to have intelligence; for it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again, Xenophanes and Hecataeus" (*polumathíē nóon ékhein ou didáskei. Hēsíodon gàr àn edídaxe kaì Puthagórēn autís te Xenopháneá te kaì Hekataĩon*; tr. Freeman; cf. Fr. B 42).

Now, since everything essentially consists of opposites, names are always insufficient as a medium to convey essences. They never capture more than one half of the essential duality. On the other hand, they are not absolutely useless either, for they do contain relevant information about that one half of the concept. This is clear from fragments like the following:

> "That which alone is wise is one; it is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus" (*hèn tò sophòn moũnon légesthai ouk ethélei kaì ethélei Zēnòs ónoma*, *Fragment* 32; tr. Freeman).

Zeus' name is felt to indicate "living" (*zẽn*); thus, it leaves out one half of an essential unity, but the half that is represented is meaningful. The divine unity of oppositions and the ensuing arbitrariness of names also comes out in *Fragment* 67:

> "God is day-night, winter-summer, war-peace, satiety-famine. But he changes like (fire; or: oil?) which when it mingles with the smoke of incense, is named according to each man's pleasure" (*ho theòs hēmérē euphrónē, kheimṑn théros, pólemos eirḗnē, kóros limós; alloioũtai dè hókōsper <pũr; elaĩon (Barnes)> hopótan summigēĩ thuṓmasin, onomázetai kath' hēdonḕn hekástou*; tr. Freeman).

In this fragment Heraclitus first refers to the essential unity of opposites (god is day-night), and then to the process of continuous change (*alloioũtai*), comparing god to fire (or oil); if it is correct to give a linear interpretation of the aphorism, naming belongs to the stage of perpetual change and cap-

tures one element of it in accordance with individual preferences. To a certain extent, names are therefore both arbitrary and conventional. The incomplete reliability of names seems to be at the heart of *Fragment* 48 as well:

> "The bow [*biós*] is called Life [*bíos*], but its work is death" (*tōĩ oũn tóxōi ónoma bíos, érgon dè thánatos*; tr. Freeman).

The opposition between name and "work" is common. See e.g. the Hippocratic *On Nutriment* 21.

Heraclitus' gambit of a world in flux was countered by Parmenides of Elea (515-after 450 BCE), who wrote a poem in hexameters (putting himself firmly in the tradition of Homer, Hesiod and oracular utterances, but also of Xenophanes who had used the same medium to contest their authority). After a prologue describing how goddesses set him on the road to knowledge, a Way of Truth, and a Way of Opinion are described. It is Parmenides' main object to penetrate the concepts of Truth and Opinion. The Way of Truth teaches him that the cosmos is eternal, unmoved and true, whereas the world of Coming-to-be is not true: in fact it is the world of "it is not". Perception does not lead to truth. Parmenides starts from the only basic truths, namely the predicate that "It is" (*esti*) and the corresponding noun (or substantivized participle) "what is" (*eón*). In the realm of Truth, there is a complete identity between being, thought and speech, but it is restricted to the only possible true statement that "What is, is" (e.g. *Fragments* B 3; 6; 7; 8.34; cf. Di Cesare 1991:94f.). "What is not" cannot be named and cannot be thought (*anóēton anṓnumon*, *Fragment* 8.17). 'Names', other than *esti* and *eón* do not belong to the sphere of Truth, but are just that: mere names that form the subjects or predicates of deceptive statements that do not reflect reality, but human beliefs:

> "Therefore, all things will be (just) a name which mortals, believing that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be, to change position, and to alter their colour from dark to bright and vice versa" (*tōĩ pánt' ónom(a) éstai,/hóssa brotoì katéthento pepoithótes eĩnai alēthẽ,/gígnesthaí te kaì óllusthai, eĩnaí te kaì oukhí,/kaì tópon allássein diá te khróa phanòn ameíbein*, *Fragment* 8.37ff.; tr. Coxon, adapted).

This is also emphasized in the transitional part of the poem, where we go from the Way of Truth onto that of Opinion:

> "At this point I cease my reliable theory and thought, concerning Truth; from here onwards you must learn the opinions of mortals, listening to the deceptive order of my words. They have established [the custom of] naming two forms, one of which ought not to be [mentioned]: that is where they have gone astray. They have distinguished

them as opposite in form, and have marked them off from another by giving them different signs [Light/Night] … But since all things are named Light and Night …" (*en tōĩ soi paúō pistòn lógon ēdè nóēma/amphìs alētheíēs: dóxas d'apò toũde broteías/mánthane kósmon emȭn epéōn apatēlòn akoúōn./53 morphàs gàr katéthento dúo gnṓmas onomázein:/tȭn mían ou khreṓn estin—en hōĩ peplanēménoi eisín -/antía d'ekrínanto démas kaì sḗmat' éthento/khōrìs ap'allḗlōn [pháos/núx]*, *Fragment* B 8,50ff.; … *autàr epeidḕ pánta pháos kaì nùx onómastai*…, *Fragment* B 9; tr. Freeman).

In the realm of Opinion, names are essentially unreliable. People think they can distinguish opposites. They give them separate names and when making a statement about them, they can use only one to the exclusion of the other, which at that time 'is not': but as we have seen, that means they tread outside the realm of Truth. The arbitrary process of naming causes fragmentation of 'what is' (cf. Di Cesare 1980:30). This seems to be the meaning of this difficult fragment. What is clear in any case, is that mortals err in assigning and/or applying names; names are instruments of Opinion (*dóxa*) (*Fragment* B 19). They belong in the domain of Opinion and are conventional. By making his distinction of the role and reliability of names in the Ways of Truth and Opinion, Parmenides reacts to Heraclitus both where the principles of change or immutability are concerned, and in the question of the relation of names to truth, reality and knowledge.

A similar view of the difference between reality and the makeshift names people use to describe their view of reality can be found in Empedocles (493–433 BCE): he thinks the world consists of the four elements, earth, water, air and fire, which are continually mixing or separating in two opposed processes directed by "Love" and "Strife":

"And I shall tell you another thing: there is no creation of substance (*phúsis*) in any one of mortal existences, nor any end in execrable death, but only mixing and exchange of what has been mixed; and the name 'substance' (phúsis, "nature") is applied to them by mankind" (*állo dé toi eréō: phúsis oudenòs éstin hapántōn/thnētȭn, oudé tis oulorménou thanátoio teleutḗ,/allà mónon míxis te diállaxís te migéntōn/ésti, phúsis d'epì toĩs onomázetai anthrṓpoisin*, *Fragment* B 8, tr. Freeman).

"Nature" "coming to being" (*phúsis*) does not correspond to an ontological reality, it is just a name. The conventional nature of names is taken up again in *Fragment* 9: If a certain phenomenon takes place

"then (they) say that this has 'come into being' … The terms that Right demands they do not use; but through custom I myself also apply these names" (*tóte mèn tò <légousi> genésthai … hē thémis <ou> kaléousi, nómōi d'epíphēmi kaì autós*, *Fragment* B 9; tr. Freeman).

Names are not in accordance with the factual state of affairs, but Empedocles

is not going to quibble over them: he adapts to custom (*nómos*) (cf. Heinimann 1945:84ff.; Schmitter 1991:76). Instead of trying to get rid of the word "coming-to-be" (*génesis*), he gives it its customary due (*Fragment* B 10, *apodoũnai toĩs onómasi tò nenomisménon*). This idea is widespread among the intellectuals of the era. Exactly the same view, namely that coming-into-being and passing away are no more than the customary names for mixing and separating, is to be found in Hippocrates' *On Regimen* 1.4. He, too, is prepared to accommodate "hoi polloi". Anaxagoras also points out the faultiness of this usage on the same grounds (*Fragment* B 17 "the Greeks have an incorrect belief (or: an incorrect usage) about Coming into Being and Passing Away" (*tò dè gínesthai kaì apóllusthai ouk orthõs nomízousin hoi Héllēnes*, tr. Freeman; notice that *nomízein* is ambiguous between "to hold a belief", and "to have a custom(ary usage)"). Herodotus extends the same tolerance to mistaken usage in his description of the coast of Asia:

> "It ends, not really but as the word goes (*nómōi*) in the Arab Gulf" (*lḗgei dè haútē, ou lḗgousa ei mḕ nómōi, es tòn kólpon tòn Arábion, Histories* 4.39, cf. Heinimann 1945:82).

According to Empedocles, language is a reflection of man's (wrong) opinions about the world, but it is useless to oppose it. Empedocles here anticipates one of the theories of meaning put forward in Plato's *Cratylus*, namely that words reflect a certain perspective on the world (see Section 6).

A similar slight depreciation of language on account of its conventional nature can be found in Socrates' contemporary, Democritus (ca. 460–360), who otherwise shows a vivid interest in linguistic (literary) questions (see Diogenes Laertius 9.37 for a list of his works). In his view there are but two realities, atoms and the void. These are "by nature" (*phúsei*), everything else is a matter of convention, or conventional linguistic usage (cf. Heinimann 1945:87f.). This can be illustrated by the fact that he uses a number of different terms to indicate what he sees as the ultimate goal of mankind, namely "contentment" (*euthumía*) (Diogenes Laertius 9.45). In Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, Democritus is made out to be a champion of the conventionalist thesis that the relation between names and things is arbitrary on the strength of four arguments, all of them reflecting a deficient one-to-one correspondence between language and reality:

> "Democritus says names are by convention and he confirms this by four dialectical proofs: (1) from homonymy: different things are called by the same name; therefore names are not by nature; (2) and from multiplicity of names: if different names will fit one and the same thing, they will also fit each other, which is impossible; (3) from the

> change of names: for why have we changed Aristocles into Plato, and Tyrtamus into Theophrastus, if names are by nature? (4) and by the deficiency of similar items: why do we say 'to be wise' (*phroneĩn*) from 'wisdom' (*phrónēsis)*, but is there no such derivation from justice (*dikaiosúnē*)? Therefore, names are by coincidence and not by nature … (7.3ff.) and he calls the first proof 'polyseme' (*polúsēmon*), the second 'equality' (*isórrhopon*), the third 'metonym' (*metṓnumon*), the fourth 'nameless' (*nṓnumon*)'' (*Ho dè Dēmókritos thései légōn tà onómata dià tessárōn epikheirēmátōn toũto kateskeúazen: ek tẽs homōnumías: tà gàr diáphora prágmata tōĩ autōĩ kaloũntai onómati, ouk ára phúsei tò ónoma; kaì ek tẽs poluōnumías: ei gàr tà diáphora onómata epì tò autò kaì hèn prãgma epharmósousin, kaì epállēla, hóper adúnaton; tríton ek tẽs tõn onomátōn metathéseōs: dià tí gàr tòn Aristokléa mèn Plátōna, tòn dè Túrtamon Theóphraston metōnomásamen, ei phúsei tà onómata? ek dè tẽs tõn homoíōn elleípseōs; dià tí apò mèn tẽs phronḗseōs légomen phroneĩn, apò dè tẽs dikaiosúnēs oukéti paronomázomen? túkhēi ára kaì ou phúsei tà onómata.* (7.3ff.)*: kaleĩ dè ho autòs tò mèn prõton epikheírēma polúsēmon, tò dè deúteron isórrhopon, <tò dè tríton metṓnumon>, tò dè tétarton nṓnumon*, Proclus in Pl. Crat. p. 6.20ff. Pasquali (= *Fragment* A 26)).

It is unclear how much in this fragment is actually Democritean, apart from the bare fact of a distinction of the different types of failing one-to-one correspondence between names and things. In spite of his view of language as a conventional system, Democritus still uses etymologies. Like Empedocles, he knows that what the etymologies will reflect is not so much a reliable picture of the world as it is, but rather convention itself, and hence, the views that go with it. Accordingly, he derives ''woman'' (*gunḗ*), from ''seed'' (*gonḗ*), because that is what she is receptive of (*Fragment* B 122a); and the name Tritogeneia for Athena, representing wisdom, is explained because three things originate from wisdom (*gínetai … tría*): good counsel, flawless speech and appropriate action (*Fragment* B 2). The context of his saying ''speech is the shadow of action'' (*lógos érgou skiḗ*, *Fragment* B 145) is lost. Maybe it simply refers to the common conception of the priority of action over words, but the word ''shadow'' seems to imply more, viz. both the derived nature of speech, and the fact that it is meaningful—even if only in a secondary or derived sense. Compare Simonides' (6th century BCE) view that ''speech is an image of the facts (so that a speech of what is useful, is useful etc.)'' (*ho lógos tõn pragmátōn eikṓn estin (hōs eĩnai tòn mèn tõn ōphelímōn ōphélimon ktl*, Simonides apud Michael Psellus, *De daemonum energia* (Patrologia Graeca Migne 122,821)); (see also Isocrates 3.7, quoted in Section 7).

Democritus' views on the opposition between convention (*nómos*) and nature (*phúsis*) reflect the general interest of contemporary intellectuals in the relationship between the two, especially in connection with the develop-

ment of human culture. Around the middle of the fifth century BCE, a number of teachers of rhetoric traveled through the Greek world, offering lectures and courses to young people who wanted to prepare themselves for active citizenship in the *polis*. Because of their interest in the nature of human culture, these sophists accorded the study of language a much greater emphasis than had the philosophers we have been discussing so far. The primary interests of the latter group was in cosmology and epistemology. The sophists on the other hand concentrated on language itself, not only because it was the medium of their rhetoric, but also as a part of human culture at large. They considered the question whether language was a cultural acquisition, and therefore a barrier between men and the ultimate truths, or a direct, natural road of access to reality. Many, but not all of the sophists opted for a relativist position, denying fixed ethical values, and stressing the arbitrariness of all conventions, including those of human language.

How widely diffused these ideas were among intellectuals of the period appears from the opening section of a treatise that was falsely attributed to the famous physician Hippocrates, but was presumably written by a 5th-century sophist. In trying to defend the status of medicine as a true art, the author of *The Art* also comes to reflect on the status of names:

> ‘‘Now reality is known when the arts have been already revealed, and there is no art which is not seen as springing from some real essence. I for my part think that the arts have also got their names because of the real essences; for it is absurd—nay impossible—to hold that real essences spring from names. For names are institutions, but real essences are not institutions but the offspring of nature’’ (*ginṓsketai toínun dedeigménōn ḗdē tō̃n tekhnéōn, kaì oudemía estín, hḗ ge ék tinos eídeos oukh horãtai. oĩmai d’ égōge kaì tà onómata autàs dià tà eídea labeĩn: álogon gàr apò tō̃n onomátōn hēgeĩsthai tà eídea blastánein kaì adúnaton; tà mèn gàr onómata [phúsios] nomothetḗmatá estin, tà dè eídea ou nomothetḗmata allà blastḗmata* [*phúseōs* A, del. Diels, post *blastḗmata* transposuit Gomperz], *The Art* 2; tr. Jones, adapted)

The author does not argue for a direct link between name and essence. On the contrary, he claims that essences are primary. Every art is based on a real essence. Only at a second stage have the arts received an (arbitrary) name; the things named, however, do in this case reflect real divisions in reality. Contrast ch. 6 of the same treatise, where the author denies that such a correspondence with reality exists for the word ‘‘spontaneity’’ (*tò autómaton*). ‘‘Spontaneity’’ is therefore ‘‘nothing but a name’’ (*oudemíēn all’ ȅ ónoma*). The priority of the ontological, existential level can be found in another pseudo-Hippocratic treatise, perhaps by Polybus (ca. 400 BCE), *On the Nature of Man*. In this work a humoral theory is expounded, in which bodily func-

tions are seen as largely dependent on an equilibrium between the four body humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm). Here, it is argued that there are four different names for these humours, precisely because there are four separate entities that correspond to these names in reality (*On the Nature of Man* 5, 6.40 Littré). The concept of naming as a method to differentiate elements of reality may equally lie behind Herodotus' intriguing remark—untrue in its literal sense—about the origin of Greek religion: "The names of almost all the gods came to Greece from Egypt" (*skhedòn dè kaì pántōn tà ounómata tō̃n theō̃n ex Aigúptou elḗluthe es tḕn Helláda*, *Histories* 2.50); it also plays a role in the Derveni Papyrus, a commentary on an Orphic cosmogony, and is taken up in Plato's *Cratylus* 388b13ff., where names are described as tools to differentiate reality (see Section 6; cf. Burkert 1985; Thomas forthcoming).

Protagoras (fl. 444 BCE), one of the proposed spiritual fathers of the treatise *The Art*, claimed that any subject gave occasion to two opposite speeches and he found a truly 'sophistic' method of confounding his opponents by ignoring the sense (*diánoian*) of words and arguing strictly from the words (*pròs toúnoma*) (*Fragment* A 1 = Diogenes Laertius 9.52). That means that he was convinced there was no naturally correct way of approaching reality with words, or rather that he was not interested in reality at all. Whether something is 'real' or 'the case' or not is immaterial to his method.

On the other hand, he is also known as the first to have explicitly formulated a number of grammatical distinctions based on semantic considerations: He distinguished the genders of the nouns, inspired by the biological difference between male, female and inanimate beings (*skeúē* "instruments", "things") (*Fragment* A 27 = Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III,5.1407b6), and criticized Homer for not applying the biological distinctions correctly in language. Surely, words like wrath (*mē̃nis*) and axe (*pḗlēx*) should be masculine: therefore, when Homer sings of Achilles' "terrible wrath" as *mē̃nin … ouloménēn* (the ending of *ouloménēn* indicates that *mē̃nin* is feminine) in the first two verses of the *Iliad*, he is committing a solecism, even if nobody had noticed before (*Fragment* A 28 = Aristotle *On Sophistical Refutations* 14.173b17). He also distinguished four types of discourse, prayer, question, answer and order, which he called "foundations of speech" (*puthménas … lógōn*, *Fragment* A 1). Again, Homer's opening verse of the *Iliad* comes in for criticism: when he sang "Goddess, sing of the wrath", he was using a command-form, instead of a prayer (*Fragment* A 29 = Aristotle *Poetics* 19.1456b15). How seriously this 'criticism' was intended, is a different matter.

Not all sophists rejected the natural 'correctness' of language, in the sense of an accurate correspondence between names and things. The correlation between such a rejection and a relativist view of ethics was mirrored in the opposite case: a belief in fixed ethical values tended to entail a certain faith in the epistemological reliability of language. The sophist Prodicus, a contemporary of Socrates and Democritus (5th century BCE), reacted to Democritus' claim that language rested on coincidence and convention. Democritus' claim was based on the absence of a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic entities and elements in the world around us. One example of this deficient correspondence was the existence of synonyms. Prodicus analysed groups of synonyms to prove that, in fact, they were not true synonyms. There were minute differences in their semantic load, as he demonstrated by a method of *diaíresis* "distinction":

> "Prodicus tried to assign a meaning of its own to each of these names, as the Stoics did [follow examples]" (*Pródikos dè epeirãto hekástōi tõn onomátōn toútōn ídión ti sēmainómenon hupotássein, hōsper kaì hoi apò tẽs Stoãs*, *Fragment* A 19 (= Alexander on Aristotle's *Topics* B 6.112b22).

Heinimann (1945:156ff.) rightly emphasizes the hidden philosophical agenda: a successful defence of language's accurate reflection of even the subtlest distinctions in reality (*orthótēs onomátōn*) is a strong argument against relativism and scepticism (cf. Momigliano 1929–30:102). And Prodicus' interest in questions of ethics and norms is borne out by his parable of Heracles on the crossroads. In sum, both the sophists who held a relativist position and those who did not, employed arguments from the nature of language, a fashionable problem in the intellectual discourse of the time.

Distinguishing synonyms and demanding a proper choice of words gained a permanent place in later linguistic theory, more specifically in rhetoric. Traces of the practice can be found in all corpora of scholia, usually in the stylized form "word x and word y differ: for ..." (*diaphérei tò A kaì tò B, hóti ...*). Accordingly, *akurología*, the use of an improper word when a better one was available, could be regarded as one of the three major vices of speech.

By the second half of the 5th century a shift in academic interest had occurred. Formerly, intellectuals had discussed the nature of language as a corollary to the study of nature and the search for its ultimate principles. Language was thought to contain a key to the Truth. Now, intellectual circles focused increasingly on the different ways one could *use* language. The difference is clear: language is no longer primarily regarded as an instrument to acquire knowledge, but to bring about actions or to influence attitudes.

Rhetoricians in particular explore the ethical and practical consequences of using language as a psychagogical device to enthrall and captivate the audience; Gorgias (483–376 BCE) is the outstanding example of an orator who goes all out for acoustic effect, bringing his audience in a kind of trance. At the same time, he also affirms the basic impossibility of true communication because of the intrinsic incommensurability of language and its objects: there is no way words can convey, for instance, a colour (*Fragment* B 3a). While Parmenides asserted the identity of being, thought and speech in the Way of Truth, Gorgias systematically invalidated this claim:

> "He says that nothing exists; and if it exists, that it cannot be known; and if it both exists and can be known, it cannot be communicated to others" (*ouk eĩnai phēsìn oudén; ei d'éstin, ágnōston eĩnai; ei de kaì ésti kaì gnōstón, all' ou dēlōtòn állois*, *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia* 979a12f.).

Under these circumstances, the only role left for language is that of a drug. Accordingly, Gorgias devoted his energy to the production of show-pieces, designed to stun.

The historian Thucydides (2nd half of the 5th century BCE) offers a striking analysis of a shrewd, politically manipulative use of evaluative terms, New Speak *avant la lettre*: Commenting on the idea that war brings out the worst in people, he gives the following illustration (3.82.4):

> "Further, they exchanged their usual verbal evaluations of deeds for new ones, in the light of what they now thought justified; thus irrational daring was considered courage for the sake of the Party; prudent delay, specious cowardice" (*kaì tȇn eiōthuĩan axíōsin tõn onomátōn es tà érga antḗllaxan tẽĩ dikaiṓsei. tólma mèn gàr alógistos andría philétairos enomísthē, méllēsis dè promēthȅs deilía euprepḗs*, *Histories* 3.82.4; tr. Wilson).

This text both suggests that there is an absolute norm of describing and evaluating certain types of behaviour, and at the same time that a conventional use of language can be highly (and misleadingly) suggestive.

By the end of the 5th century BCE, intellectuals were sharply aware of the poetic, rhetorical and philosophical potential of language. 'Meaning' was located in the relationship between words and things, in the opinion of the speakers about the world around them, and in the effect words have. All these themes were to be taken up and connected by Plato.

6. Plato: the limits of language

When Plato (427–347 BCE) wrote his *Cratylus*, one of the seminal works in the history of linguistic thought, language was definitely on the intellectual

agenda. The epistemological reflections of the pre-Socratics, and the anthropological and political interests of the Sophists had been underpinned by various arguments derived from language. Both groups had mainly been concerned with the relationship between language (names) and reality, and between words, knowledge and truth, and this was to be the central issue in the *Cratylus* as well. But why did Plato feel it imperative to address the issue, and what place does the linguistic question occupy in his philosophy? These questions must be dealt with after a discussion of the contents of the dialogue.

Socrates is asked to adjudicate in a debate between Hermogenes and Cratylus. Both positions are initially presented by Hermogenes himself; that of Cratylus is reported as follows:

> "Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians" (*Krátulos phēsìn hóde, ō̃ Sṓkrates, onómatos orthótēta eĩnai hekástōi tō̃n óntōn phúsei pephukuĩan, kaì ou toũto eĩnai ónoma hò án tines sunthémenoi kaleĩn kalō̃si, tē̃s hautō̃n phōnē̃s mórion epiphthengómenoi, allà orthótētá tina tō̃n onomátōn pephukénai kaì Héllēsi kaì barbárois tḕn autḕn hápasin*, *Crat*. 383a4ff.; tr. Fowler).

And Hermogenes' own, opposing view is expressed shortly afterwards:

> "I cannot come to the conclusion that there is any correctness of names other than convention and agreement. For it seems to me that whatever name you give to a thing is its right name; and if you give up that name and change it for another, the later name is no less correct than the earlier, just as we change the names of our servants; for I think no name belongs to any particular thing by nature, but only by the habit and custom of those who employ it and who established the usage" (*ou dúnamai peisthē̃nai hōs állē tis orthótēs onómatos ḕ sunthḗkē kaì homología. emoì gàr dokeĩ hóti án tís tōi thē̃tai ónoma, toũto eĩnai tò orthón; kaì àn aũthís ge héteron metathē̃tai, ekeĩno dè mēkéti kalē̃ĩ, oudèn hē̃tton tò hústeron orthō̃s ékhein toũ protérou, hṓsper toĩs oikétais hēmeĩs metatithémetha: ou gàr phúsei hekástōi pephukénai ónoma oudèn oudení, allà nómōi kaì éthei tō̃n ethisántōn te kaì kaloúntōn*, *Crat*. 384c10-d3, tr. Fowler).

It should be pointed out at once that both debaters are agreed on the essential correctness of names (*onomátōn orthótēs*). It is the source and definition of that correctness that is at issue. This is also clear from the way in which they both reconcile the existence of different languages with this presupposed correctness. Cratylus can refer to a correctness transcending the individual languages (worked out by Socrates in 389d4ff.); Hermogenes to the existence of different, but equally valid conventions (385d9ff.).

A second point is that the *Cratylus* is not concerned with the origin of

names or language. That names have at one point come into being is taken for granted by both parties, and it is more or less indifferent whether language was created by a god or a man, or by human society at large. Indeed, throughout the dialogue the name-giver is variously described in the singular and the plural, as god or man, or as 'men of old'. The central question is the relationship between words and reality. Cratylus does not ask himself whether *names* are *phúsei* "by nature", but whether their *orthótēs* "correctness" is by nature, and *mutatis mutandis* the same goes for Hermogenes: his concern is not with a supposedly conventional *origin* of names, but with their conventional *correctness*. On both views language was 'given' at some point; "by nature" does not refer to a spontaneous coming-into-being.

Socrates first takes up Hermogenes' position for investigation and develops a first theory of meaning in six moves. First, he gets Hermogenes to agree that it is possible to speak the truth, and, hence, to give names in accordance with what *is* (a fixed *ousía* "being"); Hermogenes turns out not to insist on an extreme relativism (385a1ff.) (1). Then, the essentially communicative (didactic) function of language and names is established, leading up to the following conclusion (2):

> "A name is, then, an instrument of teaching and of separating reality" (*ónoma ára didaskalikón tí estin órganon kaì diakritikòn tē̃s ousías*, *Crat*. 388b13f., tr. Fowler).

Thirdly, it is agreed, without any discussion, that "custom" (or "law") (*nómos*) creates language, and that whoever uses words, uses the work of an "establisher of custom" or a "lawgiver" (*nomothétēs*, 388d-e) (3), and then the question is tackled how this name-giver proceeds in giving names. Socrates submits that in fact "nature" (*phúsis*) is taken into account at this stage. The name-giver concentrates on the "absolute or ideal name" (*autò ekeĩno hò éstin ónoma*, *Crat*. 389d7) and on the object that should be named. He then creates a 'name' for this object in a phonetic form that is in itself indifferent—which explains the existence of different languages. As long as the name-giver keeps the Form (*eĩdos*) of Name in mind, he will be a good *nomothétēs* (4):

> "Then, my dear friend, must not the lawgiver also know how to embody in the sounds and syllables each object's natural name? Must he not make and give all his names with his eye fixed upon the absolute or ideal name, if he is to be an authoritative giver of names? And if different lawgivers do not embody it in the same syllables, we must not be mistaken about this on that account; for different smiths do not embody the form in the same iron, making the same instrument for the same purpose, but so long as they reproduce the same ideal, though it be in different iron, still the instrument is as it should be, whether it be made here or in foreign lands, is it not?" (*ãr' oũn, ō̃ béltiste, kaì tò*

> *hekástōi phúsei pephukòs ónoma tòn nomothétēn ekeĩnon eis toùs phthóngous kaì tàs sullabàs deĩ epístasthai tithénai, kaì bléponta pròs autò ekeĩno hò éstin ónoma, pánta tà onómata poieĩn te kaì títhesthai, ei méllei kúrios eĩnai onomátōn thétēs? ei dè mḕ eis tàs autàs sullabàs hékastos ho nomothétēs títhēsin, oudèn deĩ toũto a<mphi>gnoeĩn: oudè gàr eis tòn autòn sídēron hápas khalkeùs títhēsin, toũ autoũ héneka poiõn tò autò órganon; all' hómōs, héōs àn tḕn autḕn idéan apodidõĩ, eánte en állōi sidḗrōi, hómōs orthõs ékhei tò órganon, eánte entháde eánte en barbárois tis poiẽĩ. ẽ gár?*, *Crat.* 389d4–390a2, tr. Fowler, adapted).

The efficacity of the name-giver's work will be judged by the user, the *dialektikós* (390c11) (5). And Socrates concludes (6):

> "Then, Hermogenes, the giving of names can hardly be, as you imagine, a trifling matter, or a task for trifling or casual persons: and Cratylus is right in saying that names belong to things by nature and that not every one is an artisan of names, but only he who keeps in view the name which belongs by nature to each particular thing and is able to embody its form in the letters and syllables" (*Kinduneúei ára, ō Hermógenes, eĩnai ou phaũlon, hōs sù oíei, hē toũ onómatos thésis, oudè phaúlōn andrõn oudè tõn epitukhóntōn. kaì Kratúlos alēthẽ légei légōn phúsei tà onómata eĩnai toĩs prágmasi, kaì ou pánta dēmiourgòn onomátōn eĩnai, allà mónon ekeĩnon tòn apobléponta eis tò tēĩ phúsei ónoma òn hekástōi kaì dunámenon autoũ tò eĩdos tithénai eís te tà grámmata kaì tàs sullabás*, *Crat.* 390d7-e4, tr. Fowler).

On this view, the Form or Idea (*eĩdos*), the "natural name for each thing" (*tò tēĩ phúsei ónoma òn hekástōi*) mediates between individual names and individual items in the world—in fact, it functions as their meaning.

Now that it has been established that there *is* some natural correctness of names (*orthótēs*), a further investigation of its nature triggers the exposition of a second theory of meaning. Claiming to experience a sudden inspiration, Socrates identifies the source of correctness of names in Homer (393a4 ff.): it consists in the primacy of meaning, *dúnamis*, over form. The form of a word may change, while its meaning remains unaffected, and this can disturb a name's perspicuity. The constancy of meaning had always been, and was to remain, the basic principle of ancient etymology, and it is first formulated in the *Cratylus* (393d1f.; 394b2ff.). Socrates then launches into a series of etymologies, profiting from his fit of 'superhuman wisdom' (396d8). There is a lot of irony in the etymological section which follows, especially the repeated references to Socrates' miraculous inspiration (e.g. 396e1ff.; 399a1; 401e7; 409d1ff.; 410e3). Several etymologies are obviously intended ironically as well, as when "heroes" (*hḗrōes*) is first almost derived from "love" (*érōs*) because heroes spring from the love of a god for a mortal woman or that of a goddess for a mortal man. Socrates then quickly gives the argument a turn and derives the word from *erōtáō* "to ask" or *eírein* "to say", which

makes the heroes into the forerunners of the rhetoricians and sophists (Crat. 398c6ff.). Or the impossible *Selaenoneoáeia* (409b12), "the one who has an old and a new gleam", which is posited as the origin of *Selanaía* "moon", making its name coincide with (and anticipate!) the views defended by Anaxagoras: Hermogenes cannot refrain from commenting on its "opéra bouffe" (*dithurambõdes*, tr. Fowler) character (Crat. 409c1ff.). A comparable instance is when the word for "name" (*ónoma*) is derived from "a being that one is searching for" (*ón, hoũ másma estin*, Crat. 421b1), relating it directly to the present conversation—but also to the name-giver's activity.

In the course of the etymological section, Socrates expounds his second theory of meaning: names represent earlier people's interpretations of reality (cf. 401a1ff.); in that sense many of the etymologies can be taken seriously in that they are genuine reflections of existing views on the cosmos (according to Goldschmidt 1940 they represent a complete Heraclitean cosmology; he thinks Socrates is made to expound what were basically Cratylus' etymological theories here). Their quantity may be explained by the fact that they are supposed to represent a systematic account of nature, while the humorous touches are part of the literary make-up of the dialogue. Socrates' hypothesis is, that many names were imposed by people holding Heraclitean convictions, and he accordingly proceeds to explain a whole series of names on the supposition that 'flux' was their underlying principle. Throughout he keeps stressing that no serious explanations are to be expected from him (406b9f.; cf. 391a4 ff.). Moreover, Socrates seems fully aware of the arbitrary character of his etymological method (414d7 ff.).

When the etymological section narrows down to an investigation of the 'first words', the elements to which the other words can be reduced (422b6ff.), Socrates argues that these 'first words' are formed on the basis of sound symbolism; they make something clear (*dḗlōma* 423b1 f.) according to a mimetic principle (423b4ff.). The sounds are not just onomatopoeic, but they copy "being" (*ousía*) as their model (423e1ff.). At this point it is made clear once again that 'being' does not allow of relativism.

In the last third of the dialogue, Cratylus takes over the role of Socrates' interlocutor from Hermogenes (427c9ff.). His position was that names are always correct, or they stop being names at all—convention does not come into it. Socrates makes Cratylus admit the relevance of convention and give up his epistemological claim that whoever knows a thing's name, knows the thing itself. In order to drive home the former point, Socrates makes Cratylus acknowledge the possibility of saying something which is not true, i.e. to use

names that do not reflect reality perfectly. (It may be remembered that he used the reverse strategy against Hermogenes who was made to admit the possibility of 'true' speech.) Names are imitations of things (430a10). Since every imitation differs qualitatively from its model (otherwise it would be a complete duplicate, not an imitation), there is always a qualitative margin between a name and that of which it is the name: this means names may be more or less successful (432a8ff.; d7). Cratylus has to admit that it is custom or convention that makes people understand each other in spite of the imperfections that names may contain (435a2ff.). A word may be as similar to the thing it denotes as possible, but for the remaining part it functions by convention (435 b-c). The principle that words imitate things also makes a guest-appearance in Plato's *Sophist*: people may be deceived into the belief that what is said is actually real, because there is a similarity between words and things. Thus, discourse (*lógoi*) is in a sense no more than "spoken images" (*eídōla legómena*, Sophist 234c6); it is not the real thing. But then, in a sense, neither is the perceptible world as a whole.

After this demonstration of the influence of convention on name-giving, Cratylus' epistemological position is undermined by Socrates' demonstration that names only lead to knowledge of the namegiver's opinions on things, not to that of the things themselves (436b5f.). If the namegiver's principles are misguided, his whole vocabulary will suffer from this *vitium originis*. (At this point, Socrates shows that many words may be regarded as being formed on a principle, not that the world is in a state of continuous flux (Heraclitus' theory), but that it is at rest (the view of Parmenides and his school, the Eleatics) (437a1ff.). Therefore, it is impossible to ascribe an essential correctness of names to divine intervention: this very inconsistency in the guiding principles of the lexicon forbids it (438c5). He then raises the question of the source of the namegiver's knowledge of things. Obviously, this source cannot be the names themselves (which are yet to be given). Rather, it is extra-linguistic reality itself, that should be studied if one wants to acquire knowledge about it (438d2ff.; 438e2f.; 439b7f.): the source of knowledge must be sought in the originals, not the copies (i.e. the names) (439a5)—again the model-imitation relationship is stressed. The existence of absolute ethical notions is posited (439c8). This means that serious doubt is cast on the Heraclitean principles which apparently were at the basis of so many names. Socrates ends with a grave warning against blindly entrusting oneself to names:

> "But surely no man of sense can put himself and his soul under the control of names, and trust in names and their makers to the point of affirming that he know anything"

(*oudè pánu noũn ékhontos anthrṓpou epitrépsanta onómasin hautòn kaì tȅn hautoũ psukhȅn therapeúein pepisteukóta ekeínois kaì toĩs theménois autá, diiskhurízesthai hōs ti eidóta*, 440c, tr. Fowler).

And the dialogue ends on a protreptic note: the topic requires further study.

Plato's Socratic dialogues are to a large extent concerned with establishing the status, ontological and epistemological, of ethical concepts. Taking position against the 'relativism' of certain Sophists, who denied the existence of fixed and absolute ethical values, Plato makes his Socrates search for Truth in conversations with various interlocutors. The final object of these investigations is the Good, which is identical to the Beautiful. To Plato's Socrates knowledge of the Good ensures possession of the Good, and thus of Virtue. Whoever knows what is good, will always act virtuously. The dialectical process, the joint effort in which Socrates and his interlocutors try to attain insight in ethical questions by a succession of questions and answers, involves delivering these interlocutors from their false assumptions and claims to a knowledge that they do not possess. Socrates himself does not lay claim to any firm knowledge ('Socratic irony'); his competence is that of a midwife (his mother's profession), and thus he is able to make people give birth to whatever their minds are carrying. These spiritual children are then tested for viability in a process of *élenkhos* "cross-examination", "refutation", and their 'fathers' should be able to account for them (*lógon didónai*). If they are not, they will reach a stage of healthy perplexity (*aporía*); once they realize that they do not know what they thought they knew, there is a basis for a constructive re-investigation of the issue. Theaetetus, for example, is asked what 'knowledge' is. Once he grasps the difference between giving an example and formulating a definition, he produces several definitions, which are then successively refuted and discarded. Knowledge does not equal sense-perception, nor true opinion, nor "true opinion, accounted for". Equally, in the *Laches*, several definitions of 'courage' are tested, in the *Lysis* definitions of 'friendship', etcetera. The definitions do not constitute conclusions of research, rather they are its starting-point.

It is obvious that this dialectical process, which is at the very basis of the Platonic, or at least of the Socratic, enterprise, is seriously endangered by the extreme views of language that were popular at the time. Strangely enough, Cratylus' and Hermogenes' positions form an equally severe threat to it. In both cases, language is always 'correct', even if in the former case this correctness is legitimized by 'nature', and in the latter by convention. On Hermogenes' view, the intersubjectivity required by dialectics is replaced

by pure subjectivism. If every one is entitled to create his own language, and to assign individual meanings to names, there can be no common search for truth. (Hermogenes keeps shifting back and forth between convention as a function of the individual and of the community, see e.g. 385a4 f.) On Cratylus' view, on the other hand, every name (and every proposition) is true, or it simply is not a name any longer. There is no point in investigating names (or definitions) in a search for an ulterior truth. This view reduces one to utter inertia; it would mean the end of dialectics as a process of inquiry to get beyond mere names and appearances. But, as Socrates points out, accounting for a name does not equal grasping a concept.

Not only is this made clear in the final section of the dialogue, but it is also anticipated almost incidentally in the etymological section, when Socrates examines the names of the virtues. The "just" (*tò díkaion*) is supposed to be derived from *diaïón*, "passing through (all other things)" with an interposed *k*. So far many people would agree, but beyond that they differ (412c8ff.). Even if we agree that the word *díkaion* is formed on the supposition that everything is in flux, that does not provide us with any essential insight in the nature of justice itself:

> "Up to this point ... many men agree about justice (*díkaion*); and I, Hermogenes, being very much in earnest about it, have persistently asked questions and have been told in secret teachings that this is justice, or the cause—for that through which creation takes place is a cause—and some one told me that it was for this reason rightly called Zeus (*Día*; accusative of *Zeús*, but also a preposition meaning 'through, because of'). But when, after hearing this, I nevertheless ask them quietly, 'What then, my most excellent friend, if this is true, is justice?', they think I am asking too many questions and am leaping over the trenches. They say I have been told enough; they try to satisfy me by saying all sorts of different things, and they no longer agree" (*mékhri mèn oũn entaũtha ... parà pollõn homologeĩtai toũto eĩnai tò díkaion. egṑ dé, õ Hermógenes, háte liparḕs ȭn perì autoũ, taũta mèn pánta diapépusmai en aporrhḗtois, hóti toũtó esti tò díkaion kaì tò aítion—di' hò gàr grígnetai, toũt' ésti tò aítion—kaì "Día" kaleĩn éphē tis toũto orthõs ékhein dià taũta. epeidàn d' ēréma autoùs epanerōtõ akoúsas taũta mēdèn hẽtton: "Tí oũn pot' éstin, õ áriste, díkaion, ei toũto hoútōs ékhei?" dokõ te ḗdē makrótera toũ prosḗkontos erōtãn kaì húper tà eskamména hállesthai. hikanõs gár mé phasi pepústhai kaì epikheiroũsin, boulómenoi apopimplánai me, állos álla ḗdē légein, kaì oukéti sumphōnoũsin*, *Crat*. 412e2ff.).

Socrates then sums up the different answers he was given: One man says justice is the Sun, another says it's fire, or just the heat that is in fire; yet another adheres to Anaxagoras' view and claims that justice is 'mind' (413b3ff.).

> "Then, my friend, I am far more perplexed than before I undertook to learn about the nature of justice. But I think this name—and that was the subject of our investiga-

tion—was given to it for the reasons I have mentioned'' (*entaũtha dḕ egṓ, ỗ phíle, polù en pleíoni aporíai eimì ḕ prìn epikheirễsai manthánein perì toũ dikaíou hóti pot' éstin. all' oũn hoũper héneka eskopoũmen, tó ge ónoma toũto phaínetai autōĩ dià taũta keĩsthai*, *Crat*. 413c7ff.).

We are on well-known Socratic terrain here, and there is great irony in Hermogenes' completely misguided reaction: he cannot believe that this undoubtedly Socratic intervention was not actually taken over from someone else! On the other hand, he assumes that the rest of the etymologies are original. (Accordingly, Socrates announces that he will try to keep up the deceit (413d3 ff.).) The distinction Socrates draws in 413a5ff. is subtle, yet vital: he is convinced he knows why the name has been given, and in that sense he knows its correctness. But this teaches him nothing about the essential concept to which the name refers. Names and their 'definitions' should indeed be a starting-point, there is no way one can stop short at it. This is the reason why it is essential for Plato to come to grips with the question of the nature of names, to eliminate any false expectations of this kind; this is arguably the main *raison d'être* of the *Cratylus*. Interestingly enough, the literary form of the dialogue itself, representing three people searching for truth, underscores the Platonic position and undermines that of both Hermogenes and Cratylus: the dialogue demonstrates the relevance of the dialectical method, in that that method is its structuring principle. In that sense, the *Cratylus* is a *leçon par l'exemple*.

The two theories of meaning put forth in the *Cratylus* are both based on the principle of imitation, with different objects. Either language imitates reality and there is a direct link between linguistic phenomena and the ontological level; or language imitates a thought. This latter view on which names are the namegiver's interpretation of reality, is related to taking language as verbalized thought (and thought as an internal dialogue, *Sophist* 263e), and that is in effect what we find in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates and Theaetetus agree that one of the possible meanings of the word *lógos* is

''making one's own thought clear through speech by means of verbs and nouns, imaging the opinion in the stream that flows through the lips, as in a mirror or water'' (*tò tḕn hautoũ diánoian emphanḕ poieĩn dià phōnễs metà rhēmátōn te kaì onomátōn, hṓsper eis kátoptron ḕ húdōr tḕn dóxan ektupoúmenon eis tḕn dià toũ stómatos rhoḗn*, *Theaetetus* 206d1ff., tr. Fowler).

The idea that language is an imitation of thought processes also appears in the *Republic*, and it was to trigger a reaction from Aristotle, as we will see (Section 7). In the *Republic* Socrates argues that falsehood is incompatible

with the nature of the gods, and he makes the following comment on *spoken* falsehood:

> "But surely it would be most wholly right … to describe this as in very truth falsehood, ignorance namely in the *soul* of the man deceived. For the falsehood in *words* is a copy of the affection in the soul, an after-rising image of it and not an altogether unmixed falsehood" (*allà mẽn orthótatá g' án … toũto hōs alēthõs pseũdos kaloĩto, hē en tēĩ psukhēĩ ágnoia hē tou epseusménou, epeì tó ge en toĩs lógois mímēmá ti toũ en tēĩ psukhēĩ estì pathḗmatos kaì hústeron gegonòs eídōlon, ou pánu ákraton pseũdos*, *Rep.* II,382b6ff.; tr. R. Waterfield).

In view of the importance attributed in Plato's philosophical thought to the relationship between model and copy, it comes as no surprise to find language fitted into this conceptual framework as well. The frequent references in the *Cratylus* to language's essential status of being a copy or imitation, and its concomitant devaluation as an immediate heuristic device in the search for the absolute truths that belong to the model only, find their place in the same battle against relativism that eventually produced the theory of Forms.

Plato returns to the relationship between names, knowledge and reality in his Seventh Letter—if it is really his—, in which he explains why true philosophical thought can never be laid down in something as fixed as writing. In fact, the theory expounded here can be seen as the negative corollary of the theories of the *Cratylus*: there, the necessity of the (oral) dialectical process was put forth by denying the value of names by themselves. Here, the low status of names is used as an argument against written theories: since every expression is imperfect, it will never do to let it acquire a fixed and permanent state that does not allow of deliberation anymore.

In this letter, Plato distinguishes between names, definitions and images, three factors contributing to a fourth level, that of knowledge; all four levels are concerned with qualities, but the real essence of a thing is something separate again, a fifth item in the series. Names and definitions are vocal utterances (*en phōnaĩs*), images are corporeal, knowledge is something that exists in the soul: all four are therefore essentially external to and different from the essence; they are so many starting-points for a dialectical process of questioning and answering, of refuting false views and looking for the truth. Nothing committed to writing could be absolutely identical to the fifth element, the object of research. Once again, names is where philosophical enquiry starts, not where it ends (*Epistle* VII, 342a-344d).

One more text must be discussed here, because it takes the study of semantics one important step further. So far, the individual name was taken as the bearer not only of meaning, but also of truth and falsity. Both in the *Cratylus*

and in the *Theaetetus*, this had caused major difficulties in investigating the possibility of falsehood. A solution is reached in the *Sophist*. In *Sophist* 261d5ff., the Eleatic stranger who is talking with Theaetetus establishes the fact that not all words combine with each other indifferently; the resulting combination must be meaningful:

> "This, perhaps, is what you mean, that those which are spoken in order and mean something do unite, but those that mean nothing in their sequence do not unite?" (*Tò toiónde légeis ísōs hóti tà mèn ephexē̃s legómena kaì dēloũntá ti sunarmóttei, tà dè tēĩ sunekheíai mēdèn sēmaínonta anarmosteĩ*, *Sophist* 261d8ff., tr. Fowler).

In order to deserve the predicate 'a good fit', meaningful words must be combined, or words must be combined (a syntactical criterium, cf. *ephexē̃s legómena* "spoken one after the other"; *tēĩ sunekheíai* "in their sequence"; cf. *sumplokḗ* 262c6) in a meaningful way (a semantic criterium, cf. *dēloũntá ti* "making something clear"; *sēmaínonta* "signifying"). The "Stranger" goes on to explain that there are two basic types of "vocal indications of being" (*ésti gàr hēmĩn tõn tēĩ phōnēĩ perì tèn ousían dēlōmátōn dittòn génos*, *Sophist* 261e5), namely "names" (*onómata*) and predicates (*rhḗmata*) (*Sophist* 262a1). A 'predicate' is "the indication which relates to action" (*tò … epì taĩs práxesin òn dḗlōma*), or, somewhat differently phrased (262b) "predicates signify actions" (*práxeis sēmaínei rhḗmata*); a 'name' is "the vocal sign applied to those who perform the action in question" (*tò … ep' autoĩs toĩs ekeĩna práttousi sēmeĩon tē̃s phōnē̃s epitethén*). (Plato does not distinguish the way predicates refer to actions from that in which names refer to things or people, cf. Denyer 1991:164ff.) It takes both names and predicates to produce a statement, or sentence (*lógos*) (262a9ff.), which fulfils the function of "making something clear" (*dēloũn*), just like its constituent parts (262d2). On the other hand, it also outdoes both names and predicates taken in isolation; when someone utters the sentence "man learns":

> "he makes a statement about that which is or is becoming or has become or is to be; he does not merely give names (*onomázei*), but he reaches a conclusion by combining verbs with names" (*dēloĩ gàr ḗdē pou tóte perì tõn óntōn è gignoménōn è gegonótōn è mellóntōn kaì ouk onomázei mónon, allá ti peraínei, sumplékōn tà rhḗmata toĩs onómasi*, *Sophist* 262d2ff., tr. Fowler).

'Discoursing' is more than mere 'naming'. And 'being the case' is something else than 'being meaningful', as becomes apparent when the stranger goes on to analyse the sentences "Theaetetus sits", and "Theaetetus, with whom I am talking, flies" (263b4ff.). "Here the Stranger speaks of things that are said to 'be concerning' [or: 'be about' IS] (*eĩnai perí*) Theaetetus …; the thing

that in the true sentence is said to 'be concerning' Theaetetus actually 'is concerning' him, whereas its counterpart in the false sentence actually 'is not concerning' him'' (Denyer 1991:173). Unfortunately, what exactly these 'things' are is left unclear. A little later on, thought (*diánoia*) couched in words is said to comprise affirmation and negation (*phásis* and *apóphasis*, 263e).

It will be remembered that in the *Cratylus* neither Hermogenes nor Cratylus (nor, arguably, Plato himself at the time) had grasped the fundamental difference between being meaningful and being true. Neither had sought the truth or falsehood of a statement in its ''combination'' *súnthesis*, or in the fact that it asserted anything of a given person or thing. Both believed that falsehood was impossible, since truth resided in the individual name, and the individual name was correct (either conventionally, or by nature) (cf. Denyer 1991: 71ff.). Hermogenes assented to Socrates' proposition that true speech must consist of true parts. Therefore, if words are always (conventionally) true, falsehood is impossible (385b2ff.). Equally, on Cratylus' view falsehood is impossible (429c6ff.), since words are correct by nature. When names are not correct, they are simply names no longer. The solution reached in the *Sophist* was to be put to good use by Aristotle (see Section 7).

For Plato, the interest of language as a topic of research was completely bound up with his view of the world. Like every other phenomenon under the moon, language is an imitation of reality; there is no way in which it can lead one directly to the ultimate Truths. The best one can do, is to use it in a process of question and answer, a dialectical attempt to ascend to the absolute values of the Forms.

7. Aristotle: the function of language

The works by Aristotle (384–322 BCE) that have come down to us, cover an unusually broad area of scientific inquiries, many of them involving problems of language. Unlike Plato, Aristotle never devoted any separate work to the analysis of language, but he had occasion to take up questions of language and signification in the course of his biological and psychological work (focusing mainly on the acoustic and phonetic aspects), his poetical and rhetorical theory (in which the pragmatic side of language was dealt with) and, first and foremost, his logic (cf. Ax 1992).

Aristotle's basic conviction that ''nature does nothing in vain'' (*outhèn … mátēn hē phúsis poieĩ*, *Pol.* I,1 1253a10, and *saep.*) entails that he is

always interested in a thing's function, in its purpose. If one does not grasp a thing's purpose, one does not properly know it. This teleological approach also comes out where language is concerned, as Aristotle shifts focus from the biological to the political, rhetorical, poetical or logical functions of language in accordance with the context of his work (cf. Di Cesare 1980:8; 159). For example, animals are capable of "signifying" (*sēmaínein*) pleasure and pain by means of their "voice" (*phōnḗ*, the capacity for articulated sound-production)—that is what it is for—, but adult human speech needs has an ethical dimension:

> "speech [*lógos*] is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong" (*ho dè lógos epì tōĩ dēloũn estì tò sumphéron kaì tò blaberón, hṓste kaì tò díkaion kaì tò ádikon*, *Pol.* I,1.1253a10ff., tr. Rackham).

Of course, this fits in perfectly with the context of the *Politics*. In other contexts, however, it is mainly semanticity that is stressed. Thus, in his *Rhetoric* Aristotle takes it that the most important virtue of speech is clarity (*Rhet.* III,2.1404b1f.):

> "An argument for this is that speech, if it does not convey meaning (*dēloĩ*, if it does not make something clear), will not fulfil its proper task (*érgon*)" (*sēmeĩon gàr hóti ho lógos, eàn mḕ dēloĩ, ou poiḗsei tò heautoũ érgon*, *Rhet.* III,2.1404b2f.).

Aristotle also pays much attention to the function of language in his logic. The group of treatises known as the *Organon* consists of six works. It forms a series leading from an analysis and classification of being from a logical/semantic point of view (*Categories*), to a treatise on judgement (assertion and negation) (*On Interpretation*), typical forms of dialectical arguments (*Topics*), a classification of invalid reasoning, mainly based on confusion over the relationship between language and reality (*Sophistical Refutations*), and, finally, to the theory of the scientific syllogism (*Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*).

It is a frustrating enterprise to add one more discussion of the beginning of *On Interpretation* to the long list of those already in existence, and one can hardly hope to be original in its execution. The title of the work (*Perì hermēneías*) is interesting in itself: *hermēneía* means "interpretation, explanation"; the title may refer either to the "interpretation" (or: "expression") of thoughts by words, or, going one stage back in what eventually amounts to the same process, to "the interpretation of reality by means of a judgement" (Arens 1984:17). The former view is supported by a parallel from *Poetics*, where "diction" (*léxis*) is explained as "the expression (of thought)

through the use of words" (*tȅn dià tȇs onomasías hermēneían*, *Poet.* 6.1450b13f.; cf. Weidemann 1994:43). The latter seems preferable, however, in view of the content of *On Interpretation*: although the first four chapters do indeed deal with the relationship between thought and expression, and the nature of the constituent elements of meaningful speech, these chapters only serve as preliminary material for the more important analysis of 'positive and negative judgements' that is to follow. On either interpretation, the title bears some similarity to the second 'theory of language' from the *Cratylus*, in which names were seen as the embodiment of the namegiver's opinions, and this will be borne out by Aristotle's text. It goes without saying that in reading Aristotle, it is always imperative to keep in mind the possibility that he refers to Plato. The esoterical nature of most of the Aristotelian corpus, mostly lecture notes and other forms of writing that were not destined for the general public, hardly ever allows scope for explicit polemic—Aristotle often rejects alternative or conflicting views implicitly.

The opening section of *On Interpretation* offers a brief outline of a semantic theory. Its laconic form makes it seductively easy to read all kinds of later developments back into it.

> "First we must determine what onoma and what rhema is, and after that, what negation, affirmation, statement [or: proposition], and sentence. The spoken forms are symbols of the affections in the soul, and the written forms are symbols of the spoken forms. And just as the letters are not the same for everyone so are not the vocal forms; but what all these forms [sc. the written and spoken ones] are primarily symbols of, the affections in the soul, they are the same for all people, and what the latter are likenesses of, the things, they are also the same. Of these matters we speak in our book *On the Soul*, for this is a different subject" (*Prȭton deĩ thésthai tí ónoma kaì tí rhȇma, épeita tí estin apóphasis kaì katáphasis kaì apóphansis kaì lógos. Ésti mèn oũn tà en tēĩ phōnēĩ tȭn en tēĩ psukhēĩ pathēmátōn súmbola, kaì tà graphómena tȭn en tēĩ phōnēĩ. kaì hṓsper oudè grámmata pãsi tà autá, oudè phōnaì hai autaí; hȭn méntoi taũta sēmeĩa prṓtōn, tautà pãsi pathḗmata tȇs psukhȇs, kaì hȭn taũta homoiṓmata, prágmata ḗdē tautá. perì mèn oũn toútōn eírētai en toĩs perì psukhȇs, állēs gàr pragmateías*, *On Interpretation* 16a1–8, tr. Arens 1984, adapted).

Aristotle grounds his theory of the proposition and the judgement in a broader view of the way language operates. *Tà en tēĩ phōnēĩ* "the spoken forms", encompass all the items enumerated in the first sentence (Arens 1984:26). If judgements are interpretations of reality that eventually take on linguistic form, it becomes relevant to investigate the relationship between words, thought and things, and that is what Aristotle sets out to do.

He designs a hierarchy of symbolical representations, in which writing symbolically represents speech, while speech symbolically represents *tà en*

tẽĩ psukhẽĩ pathḗmata "the affections in the soul". I take this (with Ax 1992:253) as primarily referring to sense perception; however, since thought (mentioned in 16a10 *nóēma*) functions rather similarly to perception on Aristotle's view, there is no need to worry about the distinction). The expression "the affections in the soul" (*tà en tẽĩ psukhẽĩ pathḗmata*) is familiar from Plato's *Republic* (II,382b9f.; VI,511d7), discussed in Section 6, but there is a subtle difference. Both philosophers are aware of the possibility that language reflects thought, not reality. But Plato thinks of the relationship between thought and speech as one of model and copy, whereas to Aristotle language is symbolic. On the first view, a certain natural resemblance between thought and language is implied. We may compare Isocrates' remark on the image-like character (*eídōlon*) of language in his speech *Nicocles*:

> "For the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul" (*... tò gàr légein hōs deĩ toũ phroneĩn eũ mégiston sēmeĩon poioúmetha, kaì lógos alēthḕs kaì nómimos kaì díkaios psukhẽs agathẽs kaì pistẽs eídōlón estin*, *Nicocles* 7; tr. Norlin).

A symbolical relationship, on the other hand, is purely conventional in nature. There is no need for a symbol to be in any way similar to the object symbolized. That explains why not everyone has the same writing system, or the same sounds. Aristotle also stresses the notion of conventionality in 16a26ff. in his explanation of the definition of the *ónoma* "name" (covering parts of what we would call 'noun', 'subject', 'topic'):

> " 'Conventional' is said because no word is by nature, but only when it becomes a symbol; the inarticulate sounds, namely, of wild animals, for instance, also make something clear, but nothing in them is a word [or: *ónoma*]..." (*tò dè katà sunthḗkēn, hóti phúsei tõn onomátōn oudén estin, all' hótan génētai súmbolon, epeì dēloũsí gé ti kaì hoi agrámmatoi psóphoi, hoĩon thēríōn, hõn oudén estin ónoma*, tr. Arens 1984, adapted).

Although this might seem to bring him in proximity to Hermogenes' position, there is a vital difference. Whereas Hermogenes defended a variant of *orthótēs*, based on a conventional relationship between words and things, Aristotle ignores the question of correctness —in a way, the outcome of the *Cratylus* itself justifies the step—, and replaces the problem why names are as they are (*Cratylus*) with the question what they are for (cf. Di Cesare 1980:159). In his view, the concept of conventionality applies to the symbolic relationship between words and thought. The expression "conventionally" (*katà sunthḗkēn*) (together with "being a symbol" (*súmbolon*)) is contrasted with "by nature" (*phúsei*) here; In *On Interpretation* 17a1 ff. it is opposed

to "being a tool" (*órganon*) in the definition of the sentence (*lógos*):

> "Every sentence is significant, not as an instrument, but, as I said, conventionally" (*Ésti dè lógos hápas mèn sēmantikós, oukh hōs órganon dé, all' hōsper eírētai, katà sunthḗkēn*).

Again, it is clear that the *Cratylus* ("a name is … a didactic instrument which is able to make distinctions in all that is" (*ónoma ára didaskalikón tí estin órganon kaì diakritikòn tē̃s ousías*, 388b12)) lurks in the background, and its tenets are rejected quite apodictically. The reason why "being significant as an instrument" is opposed to "being significant by convention" appears to be that the 'instrument theory' stems from that part of the *Cratylus* where Socrates convinces the champion of the convention-theory, Hermogenes, that Cratylus is at least partially right.

Words (spoken and written) are primarily (*prō̃tōn*, used predicatively; Montanari 1984) signs of the affections in the soul; through these, they eventually refer to "things" (*prágmata*) (cf. Weidemann 1994:135; 141f.). At other places, Aristotle describes names as symbols of things without mentioning the mediating function of the affections in the soul (*On Sophistical Refutation* 165a6 ff.), and there is even one passage from the *Rhetoric* in which the notion of symbolism is omitted in favour of a purely Platonic approach. In this passage, Aristotle explains that the poets were the first to pay attention to style. We are to assume that this makes sense, since their job is imitation. This thought is left implicit, but it is to be gleaned from the explanation that Aristotle does provide:

> "For names are imitations" (*tà gàr onómata mimḗmatá estin*, *Rhetoric* III,1.1404a20f.).

However, here I will concentrate on the theory from *On Interpretation*, where, as we saw, there is a hierarchy of symbolic relationships, writing being symbolic of spoken language, and spoken language of the affections in the soul.

The relationship between "the affections in the soul" and "things", however, can no longer be described in terms of symbols: mental impressions are said to be "likenesses" (*homoiṓmata*) of things. In order to understand what is meant by this, it is necessary to follow up Aristotle's own reference and to consider his views on perception and thought, as set out in his *On the Soul* (Denyer 1991:186ff., esp. 200ff.).

Aristotle believes in the basic accuracy of perception. In his view "perception is a sort of alteration, an alteration which the thing that is perceived causes in the thing that perceives it" (Denyer 1991:189; e.g. *On the Soul*

416b33–5). Since "like causes like", the soul must have the potential for becoming "like" the thing it perceives. Perceptible objects consist of matter (*húlē*) and the active principle "form" (*eĩdos*). A perceptible object is the cause of the soul's taking on its form, but it does not pass on its matter (nor is the "matter" of the perceiver affected, Denyer 1991:194). Aristotle illustrates this with a famous image:

"We must understand as true generally of every sense that sense is that which is receptive of the form of sensible objects without the matter, just as the wax receives the impression of the signet-ring without the iron or the gold and receives the impression of the gold or bronze, but not as gold or bronze" (*kathólou dè perì pásēs aisthḗseōs deĩ labeĩn hóti hē mèn aísthēsís esti tò dektikòn tō̃n aisthētō̃n eídōn áneu tē̃s húlēs, hoĩon ho kēròs toũ daktulíou áneu toũ sidḗrou kaì toũ khrusoũ dékhetai tò sēmeĩon, lambánei dè tò khrusoũn ḕ tò khalkoũn sēmeĩon, all' oukh hēĩ khrusòs ḕ khalkós*, *On the Soul* II,12.424a18ff., tr. Hett).

The 'wax-like' quality of the soul entails that the affections (or impressions) in the soul (*pathḗmata tē̃s psukhē̃s*) from *On Interpretation* are the same for everyone, as are the things themselves (16a6–8). There is an automatic perception of perceptible forms or perceptible objects. This is the only use Aristotle has for the relationship between model (original) and copy in the context of his theory of language. Ax (1992:253) states the results for the interpretation of our passage in an exemplary way:

"Das *homoiṓmata* von 16a7 bezeichnet also nichts anderes als die Identität psychischer Rezeptionsresultate (*pathḗmata tē̃s psukhē̃s*) mit den sie bewirkenden ausserpsychischen Gegenständen (*prágmata*), und zwar im Sinne einer Abbildungs- und nicht einer Wesensidentität."

The text of *On Interpretation* continues as follows:

"Now just as there are in the mind concepts which are neither true nor false as well as such as are necessarily the one or the other, so there are likewise in speech, because in composition and division lies falsity or truth. The onomata and the rhemata alone are like concepts without composition and division, for instance 'man' or 'white', when nothing is added; for then they are neither false nor true. This is proved by the fact that even a word like goat-stag signifies something, but not yet something true or false without the addition of existence or non-existence, whether absolutely or temporarily" (*ésti dé, hṓsper en tēĩ psukhēĩ hotè mèn nóēma áneu toũ alētheúein ḕ pseúdesthai, hotè dè ḗdē hōĩ anánkē toútōn hupárkhein tháteron, hoútō kaì en tēĩ phōnēĩ; perì gàr súnthesin kaì diaíresín esti tò pseũdós te kaì tò alēthés. tà mèn oũn onómata autà kaì tà rhḗmata éoike tōĩ áneu sunthéseōs kaì diairéseōs noḗmati, hoĩon tò ánthrōpos ḕ tò leukón, hótan mḕ prostethēĩ ti; oúte gàr pseũdos oúte alēthés pō. sēmeĩon d'estì toũde: kaì gàr ho tragélaphos sēmaínei mén ti, oúpō dè alēthès ḕ pseũdos, eàn mḕ tò eĩnai ḕ mḕ eĩnai prostethēĩ, ḕ haplō̃s ḕ katà khrónon*, *On Interpretation* 16a9–18, tr. Arens 1984, adapted).

In this section, Aristotle draws the important distinction between truth-value and semantic value. Intellect, or thought, adduced as an example here, functions much in the same way as does perception (Denyer 1991:203; cf. *On the Soul* 429a13). Thinking of something presupposes that the object of our thought causes our thought to take on its "form" (*eĩdos*) (cf. Denyer 1991:203). For not only does "like cause like", but "like" is also "known by like" (*ginṓskesthai tò hómoion tōĩ homoíōi*, *On the Soul* 405b15ff.). In that sense, thought (*nóēma*) is always correct, just like perception. In another sense, however, truth or falsehood do not apply to thought as such, but only to complex thought. Where we can go wrong, is when we form judgements. When we affirm or deny mentally that a concept exists, this will either be true or false. This may be extended to language, which is, after all, nothing but a symbol for our mental impressions. Names and predicates taken by themselves are neither true nor false. An argument for this is that the name "goat-stag" has a meaning, but the name by itself cannot be said to be true or false, unless we affirm or deny its existence (present, past, or future). Similarly it is pointed out somewhat later (16b20) that every "predicate" (*rhẽ̄ma*) is a name when taken in isolation; as such it has meaning (*sēmaínei ti*), but its meaning does not include reference to its existence or truthfulness (*ei éstin ḕ mḕ, oúpō sēmaínei*). It carries meaning, "for the speaker stops his process of thinking and the mind of the hearer acquiesces" (*On Interpretation* 16b20, tr. Cook; interestingly, Aristotle refers to the intersubjectivity of meaning here). This solves the problem of names without referents (cf. the passage from ps.Hippocrates *The Art* 6, discussed in Section 5). Here, too, Aristotle could build on Plato, who had solved this very problem in his *Sophist*. There, it is pointed out that the meaning of a name "is independent of anything that may make it true" (Denyer 1991:181). A sentence carries meaning because it consists of a meaningful 'name' and a meaningful predicate. Truth and falsehood depend on the question whether the proposition 'is' really 'concerning', is really true of, the referent of its "name" part (*ónoma*). In *On Interpretation*, the symbolic relationship between language and thought is combined with this insight into the difference between semanticity and truth or falsehood. New insight into linguistic meaning results.

The ensuing definitions of "name" (*ónoma*), "predicate" (*rhẽ̄ma*), and sentence (*lógos*) share an emphasis on semanticity:

"The onoma is a vocal form with conventional timeless meaning, no part of which is significant separately …

Rhema is what cosignifies time, no part of it has separate meaning, and it is always the sign of what is said of something else…

The sentence is a significant vocal form of whose parts some have meaning separately, as an expression, not as an affirmation" (*ónoma mèn oũn estì phōnḕ sēmantikḕ katà sunthḗkēn áneu khrónou, hẽs mēdèn méros estì sēmantikòn kekhōrisménon …*
Rhẽma dé esti tò prossēmaĩnon khrónon, hoũ méros oudèn sēmaínei khōrís, kaì éstin aeì tõn kath' hetérou legoménōn sēmeĩon …
Lógos dé esti phōnḕ sēmantikḗ, hẽs tõn merõn ti sēmantikón esti kekhōrisménon, hōs phásis, all' oukh hōs katáphasis, *On Interpretation* 16a19ff.; 16b6ff.; 16b26ff., tr. Arens 1984, adapted)

Ónoma and *rhẽma* are differentiated by the fact that *rhẽma* cosignifies 'time', while 'time' forms no part of an *ónoma*'s meaning. Moreover, *rhẽma* is always a sign for what is predicated of something else (or: of a predicate). Among the class of sentences, a further distinction is drawn by means of the truth criterium: when a sentence admits of truth or falsehood, it is a proposition (*apophantikòs lógos*). And that takes Aristotle to the heart of what he wanted to discuss in his *On Interpretation*. Once again the difference with the *Cratylus*, but the similarity to the *Sophist* must be stressed: In the discussion between Cratylus and Socrates on the possibility of falsehood, the example given was not a proposition, but an address ("Welcome, stranger from Athens, Hermogenes son of Smicrion", addressed to Cratylus (429e4f.); cf. Denyer 72ff.; Hermogenes was in fact the son of Hipponicus). Only in the *Sophist* was the discussion restricted to minimal sentences consisting of what we would call a subject and a predicate.

Aristotle needed the first chapter of *On Interpretation* to provide some background information for his theory of judgement that was to follow. His rapid sketch of the functioning of language proved to have a rich potential. It anticipated many developments in semantic theory, but did no more than that: its own interests eventually lay elsewhere. If he could pass so rapidly over the distinction between semanticity and truth value, this was because he could build on Plato's work here. What was new was his theory of the linguistic sign, bearing a symbolic relationship to the thought of the speaker, and only secondarily to the things.

Apart from the brief outline in the first chapter of *On Interpretation*, semantic distinctions play a role in different parts of Aristotle's work (Ax 1992). The points he stresses are mainly to do with the deficient one-to-one relationship between words and things, language and concepts. This is important, since the starting-point for philosophical investigation is formed by the concepts people have (*éndoxa*), and these concepts are revealed by language ("the things said", *tà legómena*). Linguistic expressions of thought, ordinary

speech and belief about human life (*phainómena*) must be tested and scrutinized, especially if they are in conflict with each other, or if they are not univocal to begin with. Thus, in a sense language provides both the subject-matter and the tools of philosophical discourse (cf. Owen 1986).

In his *Categories*, the first work in the *Organon*, Aristotle provides a system for classifying reality from a logico-semantic point of view. The categories are Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, State/Condition, Action and Passion. The exact status of the categories is nowhere made clear; they combine ontological, linguistic (semantic) and logical characteristics. However, it is clear that Aristotle's starting-point is reality, and that his distinctions are largely motivated by semantic (and logical) considerations.

This is borne out by the beginning of the treatise, where Aristotle gives definitions of "homonyms" (*homṓnuma*), "synonyms" (*sunṓnuma*) and "paronyms" (*parṓnuma*). All three terms are primarily used as modifiers of elements of reality, not of linguistic entities (cf. Desbordes 1988; Sluiter 1990:125f.). According to Simplicius (6th century CE), who wrote a commentary on the *Categories*, Aristotle took over this principle from Speusippus, Plato's successor as head of the Academy (see Dillon 1977:20; Desbordes 1988:58f.). The *Categories* opens with the following three definitions:

(1) "Things are equivocally named, when they have the name only in common, the definition (or statement of essence) corresponding with the name being different. For instance, a man and a portrait can both be called 'an animal' (*zō̃ion*)" (*Homṓnuma légetai hō̃n ónoma mónon koinón, ho dè katà toúnoma lógos tē̃s ousías héteros, hoĩon zō̃ion hó te ánthrōpos kaì tò gegramménon*, *Categories* 1a1ff., tr. Cook, adapted).

(2) "Things are univocally named, when not only they bear the same name but the statement of essence corresponding to the name is also the same. Thus a man and an ox can both be called 'an animal'" (*Sunṓnuma dè légetai hō̃n tó te ónoma koinòn kaì ho katà toúnoma lógos tē̃s ousías ho autós, hoĩon zō̃ion hó te ánthrōpos kaì ho boũs*, *Categories* 1a6ff., tr. Cook, adapted).

(3) "Things are 'derivatively' named that derive the way they are called from something while differing in verbal form, as for instance 'grammarian' from 'grammar', from 'heroism', 'hero' and so on" (*parṓnuma dè légetai hósa apó tinos diaphéronta tē̃i ptṓsei tḕn katà toúnoma prosēgorían ékhei, hoĩon apò tē̃s grammatikē̃s ho grammatikòs kaì apò tē̃s andreías ho andreĩos*, *Categories* 1a13ff.).

The first quotation suggests that the term 'homonyms' always refers to

entities or concepts that do not belong as species to the same genus, but whose respective genera happen to share the same name. And they may in their turn be designated by that common name. Though more sophisticated, this is not fundamentally different from Homer's usage, who calls the Greater and the Lesser Ajax "homonymous" (*homṓnumoi*, *Iliad* 17.720). Aristotle's example (portrait and man) derives from Plato:

> "And so we recognize that he who professes to be able by virtue of a single art to make all things will be able by virtue of the painter's art, to make imitations which have the same names as the real things (*mimḗmata kaì homṓnuma tõn óntōn*), and by showing the pictures at a distance will be able to deceive the duller ones among young children into the belief that he is perfectly able to accomplish in fact whatever he wishes to do" (*Oukoũn tón g' hupiskhnoúmenon dunatòn eĩnai miaĩ tékhnēi pánta poieĩn gignṓskomén pou toũto, hóti mimḗmata kaì homṓnuma tõn óntōn apergazómenos tẽĩ graphikẽĩ tékhnēi dunatòs éstai toùs anoḗtous tõn néōn paídōn, pórrōthen tà gegramména epideiknús, lanthánein hōs hótiper àn boulēthẽĩ drãn, toũto hikanōtatos ȭn apoteleĩn érgōi*, *Sophist* 234b5ff., tr. Fowler).

In other contexts, Aristotle also uses 'homonym' to designate words, rather than things, e.g. in *On Sophistical Refutations* 165b33:

> "Here 'learn' is equivocal (*homṓnumon*), (meaning) 'understand by using knowledge' and 'acquire knowledge' " (*Tò gàr manthánein homṓnumon, tó te xuniénai khrṓmenon tẽĩ epistḗmēi kaì tò lambánein epistḗmēn*, tr. Forster).

That this is the correct interpretation is shown by the fact that only in these contexts can 'homonym' occur in the singular; when referring to entities or concepts, there is always at least a pair of 'homonyms' involved.

Even more explicitly, in the *Rhetoric* homonyms are called a type of 'names'/'nouns' that is especially useful to the sophist, while synonyms come in handy for the poet; here it is obvious that types of words are meant:

> "In regard to nouns, homonyms are most useful to the sophist, for it is by their aid that he employs captious arguments, and synonyms to the poet" (*tõn d'onomátōn tõĩ mèn sophistẽĩ homōnumíai khrḗsimoi (parà taútas gàr kakourgeĩ), tõĩ poiētẽĩ dè sunōnumíai*, *Rhetoric* 1404b37ff., tr. Freese; cf. Sluiter 1990:125; cf. *Rhetoric* III,2.1405a1ff. for the use of *sunṓnuma* to designate types of words).

In the second quotation from the *Categories*, however, synonyms—like homonyms in the same treatise—are entities or concepts. Synonyms belong as species to the same genus, thus sharing not only its name, but also its definition.

The third type bears the clearest mark of linguistic inspiration: "paronyms" are things that get their name from something else, while the linguistic

form in which they are expressed is different, but related. The clear relationship between words like 'grammarian' and 'grammar' obviously suggested their joint classification.

Ax (1992:256) calls attention to the other types of semantic distinctions that are to be found throughout Aristotle's work. Especially in his biological works, Aristotle points out lacunae in the Greek lexicon, where a separate name (e.g. for a genus that should logically be superordinated to a number of species) is lacking. The term used is *anṓnumon*, and we may compare Democritus' fourth argument (*nṓnumon*) against names being by nature. Obviously, in this case Aristotle reasons from 'things' to 'names' again, the nature of the problem forbidding the opposite analysis.

An interesting refinement of the theory of homonymy and synonymy is the development of a concept of 'focal meaning' (the term is coined by Owen 1986:184; cf. Lloyd 1987:198ff.). 'Focal meaning' is the phenomenon that there is one focus, one common element in all the senses of a given word (Owen 1986:183). Words with focal meaning are used "by reference to one concept" (*pròs hén*) or "taking their origin from one thing" (*aph' henós*); the phenomenon is diagnosed as "being said in various senses" (*pollakhō̃s légesthai* (e.g. *Metaphysics* III,2.10033a33ff.) or "being said in more than one sense" (*pleonakhō̃s légesthai*, *Topics* 106b29ff., and it is explained as follows:

> "The term 'being' is used in various senses (*pollakhō̃s*), but with reference to one central idea (*pròs hén*) and one definite characteristic, and not equivocally (*homōnúmōs*). Thus as the term 'healthy' always relates to health (either as preserving it or as producing it or as indicating it or as receptive of it) … so 'being' is used in various senses, but always with reference to one principle (*Tò dè òn légetai mèn pollakhō̃s, allà pròs hèn kaì mían tina phúsin kaì oukh homōnúmōs, all' hṓsper kaì tò hugieinòn hápan pròs hugíeian, tò mèn tōĩ phuláttein tò dè tōĩ poieĩn tò dè tōĩ sēmeĩon eĩnai tẽs hugieías tò d' hóti dektikòn autẽs … hoútō dè kaì tò òn légetai pollakhō̃s mèn all' hápan pròs mían arkhḗn*, *Metaphysics* III,2.1003a34ff., tr. Tredennick; cf. Met. IX,3.1060b31ff.).

Aristotle needs this concept to explain the possibility of one unified theory of Being in spite of the non-univocal nature of the word "being" (*ón*) itself, which has different meanings in different categories (Owen 1986:181 ff.).

The difference with the concept of homonymy from *On Categories* is, that the theory of 'focal meaning' starts from words, not from things. Nor are words with 'focal meaning' to be identified with "things that are derivatively named" (*parṓnuma*) (pace Ross ad *Metaphysics* III,2.1003a34 ff.). Paronyms are things in the world, while words with 'focal meaning' are precisely that, namely words. Secondly, words with 'focal meaning' are defined by their

relation to one concept (*aph' henós*), while derivatively named things derive their *names* "from something" (*apó tinos*), but differ in inflected or declined verbal form (*ptõsis*). And, thirdly, related inflected forms (*ptṓseis*) can be bearers of focal meaning, but this is not necessarily the case. There is no need to assume that every 'paronym' behaves as a word with focal meaning, carrying more than one sense with a common concept as unifying factor (cf. *Topics* I,15.106b29 ff.).

In another passage, it seems that (random) 'equivocity' is the general term of which focal meaning is a special case (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1096b26 ff., with the commentary by Gauthier & Jolif). Aristotle would then distinguish three different species of the genus 'homonymy', the most common of which can itself also be called 'homonymy': (1) the case where completely different and unrelated things share the same name by chance (example: "animal" (*zõĩon*)—this species may be called 'homonymy' too; it is homonymy *par excellence*; (2) 'focal meaning': different things can be called by the same name because they all relate to the same central concept, be it in different ways (example: "healthy" (*hugieinón*)); (3) analogical or proportional homonymy: things bear the same name, or acquire the same predicate because they stand in a similar relationship to (ever varying) objects (example: "good" (*agathón*): Sight is to body as intellect is to soul. Therefore, the same predicate (i.c. "good") can be applied to both sight and intellect.

Interestingly, Aristotle extends the principle of proportionality both to homonymy and to metaphor (cf. *Poetics* 21.1457b); there, he also explains the linguistic process involved in terms of a transfer between species and genera, and evinces a preference for the analogical type. In general, it seems likely that the theory of 'focal meaning' and of 'proportional homonymy' originated in a rhetorical, rather than a logical context. This is, I think, clear from the fact that Aristotle stresses its argumentative use: any sense applying to 'healthy' also applies to 'healthily'. This reminds one of the argumentative 'paradigms', groups of forms belonging together (*sustoichía*; in later theory *suzugía*) that are discussed extensively in the *Topics* (e.g. 114a26ff.) (cf. Sluiter 1990:84).

Aristotle's contribution to the development of semantics was substantial. His brief outline in *On Interpretation* was destined to become the most discussed text in the history of linguistics. Building on Plato's work, he explicitly defined the relationship between language, thought and reality. His theory of the symbolic (instead of mimetic) nature of the linguistic sign was

revolutionary. He explained the existence of non-referential terms. In a great many different contexts, in rhetoric, poetics, phonetics/acoustics, biology and logic, he tried to clarify the various functions of language, and to determine what language is for. The fact that language itself, as the embodiment of common concepts, formed the starting-point as well as the method of doing philosophy, is made explicit in his theory of the common concepts (*éndoxa*), opinions (*phainómena*) and things said (*legómena*). These are subjected to intensive scrutiny to eliminate untenable ones and to establish valid premisses for scientific discourse.

8. The Hellenistic period: philosophy and philology

In the Hellenistic period (roughly from the death of Alexander (323 BCE) to the Battle of Actium (31 BCE), new insights in semantics were mainly being developed in two contexts: philosophy, with the important contributions of the Stoa and Epicurus; and philology, with the tentative rise of a more technically oriented grammar as a by-product. It is important to realize that these developments occur simultaneously—this is the reason why they are discussed in one section here.

The Stoa was founded in the early 3rd century BCE, and its most important thinker, Chrysippus, lived from ca 280–205 BCE. After Aristotle's methodical differentiation of the various scientific disciplines, the Stoa stressed the unity of its system, and it grounded its ethics in particular on a scientific basis (cf. Schmidt 1984:287). The 'wise man' attains a state of freedom from emotional disturbances (*apátheia*), because he knows that virtue is the only good. Thus, he is able to form correct judgements about every situation that presents itself to him, and to evaluate it correctly. The constant correctness of these judgements guarantees a continual state of tranquillity of mind. Judgements are expressed in language, the bearer of truth and falsehood being the proposition. This is why language is an important topic for examination.

What happens when we form a judgement is the following: the material world around us gives rise to presentations or impressions (*phantasíai*) that are formed in our (equally material) souls. Our minds may either give their assent to, or withhold it from such a presentation, which is always primary:

> "For presentation comes first; then thought, which is capable of expressing itself, puts into the form of discourse what it experiences through the presentation" (*proēgeĩtai gàr hē phantasía, eĩth' hē diánoia eklalētikḕ hupárkhousa, hò páskhei hupò tẽs phantasías, toũto ekphérei lógōi*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.49).

One way to classify presentations, is to divide them into "rational" (*logikaí*) and "irrational" (*álogoi*) ones. A rational presentation (i.e. one experienced by a rational being) is called a "thought process" (*nóēsis*) (Diogenes Laertius 7.51). The Stoic theory of meaning is intricately linked up with these views about epistemology and, through them, with ethics.

Stoic ideas of language are discussed under two headings, one dealing with language's formal aspects ("sound", *phōnḗ*), the other with "meanings" (*sēmainómena*) (Diogenes Laertius 7.43). Three elements are conjoined in any given meaningful utterance: the signifier (*sēmaĩnon*), the extra-linguistic referent (*tunkhánon*) and the meaning (*sēmainómenon*) (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.11 f.). Signifier and referent are corporeal, for they can act or be acted upon (e.g. a word can travel from speaker to listener). Meaning is incorporeal, and remains unaffected by whatever happens to either the signifier or the referent. The Stoic chapter on the formal aspects of language develops the idea of an implicative hierarchy: mere 'sound' is nothing but battered air, verbal expression (*léxis*) is sound that can be captured in writing (i.e. that is articulate), discourse (*lógos*) is meaningful sound that is sent forth from the mind (Diogenes Laertius 7.55f.). Notice that the concept of 'word' is lacking. A sentence may be called *lexis* if abstraction is made from its meaning, and the emphasis is on its characteristic of being articulate (writable) speech. Later theory misunderstood this part of Stoic thought and reinterpreted the distinction between *léxis* and *lógos* as that between 'word' and 'sentence'. The Stoa probably took over Plato's and Aristotle's suggestion of thought being an internal dialogue, while meaningful language is thought that is expressed linguistically, in their distinction of a *lógos endiáthetos* "internal reason/discourse" and a *lógos prophorikós* "expressed reason/discourse".

The chapter on meanings includes the theory of presentations or impressions (*phantasíai*) discussed above, but it also develops the notion of the *lektón*, the Stoic locus for meaning *par excellence*. A *lektón* or "sayable" is defined as "that which subsists according to a rational presentation" (*tò katà phantasían logikḕn huphistámenon*, Diogenes Laertius 7.63; Sextus Empiricus 8.70). As we saw above, a rational presentation, or thought-process can be expressed in discourse, it is available to be expressed (i.e. 'sayable'), and so, through it, is the fact or event in the material world that gave rise to the presentation or impression. In that sense 'meaning' is related to thought-content in Stoic theory like it was in Aristotle. On the other hand, it does not simply equal the thought-process (which is in itself material, because it is mind in a certain condition), but it "subsists in accordance with it". The

unusual verb "to subsist" (*huphestánai*) is used, because *lektá* do not 'exist' in the full sense of the word, they are 'somethings', but they do not fall under the concept of 'being' (Long & Sedley 1987:I,162ff.). Like the other incorporeal items in Stoic ontology, time, place and the void, they 'subsist' only. The incorporeal nature of the *lektón* is stressed by Seneca (*Letters to Lucilius* 117.13). The Stoics thus gave a place in their ontology to states of affairs of the form 'that Cato walks', as opposed to the material Cato and his material walking. As Seneca puts it: "it makes all the difference whether you name a thing or speak about it" (*plurimum autem interest utrum illud dicas an de illo*, *Letters to Lucilius* 117.13).

Lektá can be either complete or incomplete, and, interestingly, this depends on the completeness of the expression. A predicate like 'writes' is an incomplete expression, representing an incomplete *lektón*, for we ask ourselves: "who writes?". Thus, a predicate is an incomplete *lektón*. It is the 'incomplete meaning' corresponding to e.g. a verb on the level of the expression. The standard example of a complete *lektón* is the axiom or proposition, the bearer of truth and falsehood (Diogenes Laertius 7.63). A predicate requires a 'nominative case' in the open slot in order to produce an axiom, but the 'nominative case' itself is never called an incomplete *lektón*: to qualify as a *lektón* there has to be a propositional content, or the content of a speech-act. This fits in with the difference between the Stoic logic of propositions as opposed to the Aristotelian logic of terms.

The relationship between expressions and *lektá* is especially interesting: the restrictions of human language and thought make it necessary to talk about these two items in isomorphic terms, but their elements do not have a one-to-one correspondence. One expression may represent various *lektá* and vice versa. Although according to the Stoa language was originally in perfect rational order, the corruptions occurring with the passage of time disturbed the primeval perfect economy of language, which included such a one-to-one correspondence as well as complete perspicuity.

An example of disrupted perfection is the phenomenon of ambiguity. Atherton (1993:53) points out the relevance of the ethical point of view in this area as well: expressions which could give rise to two or more interpretations could mislead the would-be wise man inadvertently to give his assent to a false presentation, and that in turn could endanger his success as a moral agent, i.e. the achievement of *apátheia*. The distinction between signifier and referent solves the ambiguity of the 'Wagon', which seems to have occurred independently in other grammatical traditions as well:

"If you say something, it passes through your lips: now you say wagon, consequently

a wagon passes through your lips" (*eí ti laleĩs, toũto dià toũ stómatós sou diérkhetai; hámaxan dè laleĩs; hámaxa ára dià toũ stómatós sou diérkhetai*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.187; tr. Hicks (cf. for full references Atherton 1993:285f.).

In their reading of Homer, the Stoics practised allegory, not so much to show that Homer was a Proto-Stoic, but to prove that the truths they presented could boast a long pedigree. In fact, it is likely that they believed that Homer himself could not understand the deep truths hidden in his work anymore. Again, the passage of time had corrupted original lucidity (cf. Long 1992).

Epicurus (341–271 BCE) showed an interest in language in two connections, namely its origin, and its epistemological role. He developed a philosophy which aimed at procuring freedom of emotional disturbances (*ataraxía*), by liberating mankind of fear of the gods and fear of death. The gods lead a remote existence, far away from our world with which they do not interfere at all. This theory gave Epicurus a vested interest in stressing the original naturalness of language, which according to him came into being without any divine intervention. When mankind further developed and organized its rudimentary language, however, an element of arbitrariness and convention was introduced.

More important for our present purposes are Epicurus' views on the relationship between language and knowledge. Epicurean physics is an atomistic system, the world being material and built up out of clusters of atoms. Physical objects emit streams of particles, which form images. These images are received by the observer or hearer, and may or may not be an accurate reflection of the original object—some wear and tear may occur during transmission. On the receiving end, there is a sensation (*aísthēsis*) and/or a feeling (*páthos*), which are in themselves criteria of truth: they are always (subjectively) 'true' in the sense that they are completely determined by the image. They are indubitable facts of experience (Long 1971:116). If these sensations or feelings are 'clear', i.e. if they are accompanied by the "clear view" (*enárgeia*) and if they are compatible with the so-called "preconceptions" (*prolḗpseis*), a judgement can be formed which is objectively true. It is these preconceptions which form the Epicurean locus for 'meaning'.

"Preconception … is as it were a perception, or correct opinion, or conception, or universal 'stored notion' (i.e. memory) of that which has frequently become evident externally: e.g. 'Such and such a kind of thing is a man'. For as soon as the word 'man' is uttered, immediately its outline also comes to mind by means of preconception, since the senses give the lead. Thus what primarily underlies each name is something self-evident … Nor would we have named something if we had not previously learnt its

outline by means of preconception. Thus preconceptions are self-evident'' (*tẽn dè prólēpsin légousin hoioneì katálēpsin ẽ dóxan orthẽn ẽ énnoian ẽ katholikẽn nóēsin enapokeiménēn, toutésti mnḗmēn, toũ pollákis éxōthen phanéntos, hoĩon 'tò toioũtón estin ánthrōpos'. háma gàr tõĩ rhēthẽnai ánthrōpos euthùs katà prólēpsin kaì ho túpos autoũ noeĩtai proēgouménōn tõn aisthḗseōn. pantì oũn onómati tò prṓtōs hupotetagménon enargés esti … oud' àn ōnomásamén ti mẽ próteron autoũ katà prólēpsin tòn túpon mathóntes. enargeĩs oũn eisin hai prolḗpseis*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of eminent Philosophers* 10.33, tr. Long & Sedley 1987:I,87f., adapted).

By repeatedly encountering a phenomenon and remembering those encounters, we acquire a generic notion of such an object of experience. It is this concept which is naturally evoked by the name of that thing (cf. Long & Sedley 1987:I,89). Conversely, we need such a concept in order to be able to name a phenomenon in the first place. The ''preconception'' (*prólēpsis*) is the first thing that comes to mind (*prõton ennóēma*, cf. *Letter to Herodotus* 38; 72), something underlying the sounds uttered (*tà hupotetagména toĩs phthóngois*, *Letter to Herodotus* 37f.), and these preconceptions are 'self-evident' or 'clear', i.e. they need no exterior validation. The two sources which deny that Epicurean philosophy knows of any mediator between names and things have a clear Stoic bias (Plutarch *Against Colotes* 1119F and Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.13): if they were looking for incorporeal equivalents to Stoic *lektá*, the Epicurean theory would seem deficient indeed. But the concept of *prólēpsis* does mediate between the sounds (*phthongoí*) and things in the world.

Apart from the philosophical theories developed in the Hellenistic period, this era also saw the rise of philology as a separate and distinguished discipline with the foundation of the Museum at Alexandria. By sponsoring a group of eminent scholars who were working on the cultural heritage of Greece, the Ptolemies hoped to corroborate their claim to be the true heirs of Alexander the Great, and of Greek culture (*paideía*) in general, which was mainly embodied in the great Greek poets of the past, Homer prominent among them. The three most famous philologists were Zenodotus (fl. 3rd century BCE, 1st half), Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 255–180 BCE) and Aristarchus (217–145 BCE).

Their interest in semantics is apparent from their lexicographical work: Zenodotus composed lists of difficult words (*Glõssai*), Aristophanes wrote several lexicographical treatises organised around semantic fields, and forming part of the larger work called *Words* (*Léxeis*), e.g. on *Names of Kinship* (*Onómata Suggeniká*) and *Names of Ages* (*Perì onomasías hēlikiõn*).

Callanan (1987:90ff.) collects the evidence for his use of semantic criteria in settling philological questions: he uses the concept of literal and metaphorical usage, complete with the technical terms "properly/improperly used" (*kuríōs/akúrōs*) and "metaphor" (*metaphorá*). And he is also familiar with the concepts of homonymy and the absence of a word that would fit a slot in the lexical system (e.g. there is no Greek word that specifically describes a brother's wife)—this is the Democritean *nṓnumon*; Aristarchus himself does not use any technical terminology for these latter two phenomena. He did not write any lexica, but his commentaries contained numerous explanations of poetic usage. In addition, of the three great Alexandrian philologists, it is his exegetical principles that are most clearly identifiable: He tried to explain Homer from Homer (whether or not that famous phrase can actually be attributed to him), and asked for consistency and functionality in Homer's work. Where those characteristics seemed to be absent, he felt there was reason to doubt the correctness of the transmission.

One of Aristarchus' pupils is Dionysius Thrax (2nd century BCE). The *Art of Grammar* that has come down to us under his name may or may not be authentic, but it is certainly representative of the grammatical knowledge of the time. It is a rather schematic overview of the tasks of the grammarian and the parts of speech, with many subclassifications. Three out of six tasks of the grammarian have a clear semantic component: "exegesis according to the poetical expressions" (*exḗgēsis katà toùs enupárkhontas poiētikoùs trópous*, 1 p. 5,4); "prompt rendering of poetical words and realia" (*glōssō̃n te kaì historiō̃n prókheiros apódosis*, 1, p. 6,1); and "discovery of etymology" (*etumologías heúresis*, 1, p. 6,1f.). The brief section on punctuation defines both the full-stop and the comma in relation to the question whether or not the "thought has been completed" (e.g. *dianoías apērtisménēs*, 4, p. 7,5). Similarly, the sentence is defined as "a composite prose expression, indicating a complete thought" (*pezē̃s léxeōs súnthesis diánoian autotelē̃ dēloũsa*).

Some of the definitions of the parts of speech have a semantic component (e.g. the noun "signifies a body or a thing" (*sõma ḕ prãgma sēmaĩnon*), the verb signifies an action or passion, and the pronoun indicates previously identified persons). Moreover, the noun and the adverb are further classified according to semantic criteria. In the case of the noun such a classification is applied twice. First it affects the subtypes of derived nouns, and then it is used to categorize the nouns as a whole. Interestingly, the subclassification of the derived nouns is itself a mix of semantic and morphological criteria. Derived nouns can be patronymics, words indicating possession, compara-

tives, superlatives, terms of endearment, but also (and there is no indication that we are on a different level here) words derived from nouns, or from verbs (12, p. 25,3ff.).

Although semantic criteria have a considerable relevance, there is no explicit theory of meaning in Alexandrian grammar. The notion that meaning resides on the level of the proposition only is clearly abandoned, in favour of a view which attributes meaning to individual words. For the first time, the notions of word and sentence start playing a role.

Philology became an intellectual trend in this period, to the extent that it actually influenced the modes of thought in non-linguistic disciplines like medicine. The works attributed to the great 5th-century-BCE physician Hippocrates attracted the same kind of philological attention as did Homer. Lexica and commentaries were being produced, and, clearly, the predominant interest in Hippocrates' medical information and the virtual irrelevance of his literary qualities promoted an even stronger concentration of what the texts actually meant—at least this is what the exegetes themselves claim. In fact, however, the dominant literary paradigm and its requirements do influence their interpretations. Apart from medicine, in the 2nd century BCE the philosophical texts by Epicurus were the object of a commentary by Demetrius Lacon, who also applied philological tools to elucidate the meaning of Epicurus' words. Unclarities in the work of the master had to be eliminated, because they disturbed the tranquillity of mind of his followers, the very goal of Epicurean philosophy. As in the Stoic theory of ambiguity, an ethical motivation validates the study of language and texts. A whole stream of philosophical and technical commentaries on great authoritative texts by past masters was to follow. Neo-Platonists (commenting on Plato and Aristotle) and Christians (commenting on the Bible), developed exegetical and hermeneutic principles, for instance, that a text should be interpreted in view of a unified theme (Jamblichus, 3rd century CE), even if read on different levels; or that true understanding was a matter of inspiration. They also looked for criteria on the basis of which one could decide whether texts were to be read literally or allegorically. However, no new theories of linguistic meaning were generated in this context.

9. Apollonius Dyscolus: the role of semantics in syntactic theory

The grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus (2nd century CE) wrote an extensive oeuvre, which has only partially come down to us. Apart from three minor

works (*On Pronouns*, *On Adverbs* and *On Conjunctions*) and some fragments, we have his four books *On Syntax*. Apollonius made a substantial contribution towards making grammar an autonomous discipline. He wants to provide a framework for problem-solving, which can be used by philologists, who try to establish the correct text of their literary authors (*diórthōsis*), rhetoricians and philosophers, who look for linguistic purity and correctness (*Hellēnismós*) and orthographers, who investigate criteria for correct spelling. Apollonius is indebted to all of these groups, especially to the (Stoic) philosophers, but his own work claims to provide a new and independent method for all of them. Part of his conceptual linguistic model is philosophical in origin, but Apollonius is not committed to Stoic philosophy. Part of his input may be Stoic, but his output is his own.

According to Apollonius, language is an orderly system, with a hierarchy of levels, ascending from letters, to syllables, to words, through concepts, to the meaningful and grammatically sound sentence (*autotelȅs lógos*) (*On Syntax* I,2, 2.3ff.). There is isomorphism between the several levels: their organisation is structurally identical and the orderly and regular combination of elements from each level forms those of a higher one. The complete sentence can be formed by words, because upon each word an intelligible (concept), a meaning that can be thought (*noētón*) is grafted, and these meanings are the elements (*stoikheĩa*, the same word is used for "letters") of the meaningful and complete sentence:

> "And just as the elements [i.e. letters] in their combinations complete syllables, so too does the syntax of the intelligibles complete syllables in a certain sense, through the combination of words. Again, as the word comes from the syllables, so does the complete sentence come from the regularity (symmetrical congruence) of the intelligibles" (*kaì hōs tà stoikheĩa tàs sullabàs apoteleĩ katà tàs epiplokás, hoútō kaì hē súntaxis tõn noētõn trópon tinà sullabàs apotelései dià tẽs epiplokẽs tõn léxeōn. kaì éti hòn trópon ek tõn sullabõn hē léxis, hoútōs ek tẽs katallēlótētos tõn noētõn ho autotelȅs lógos*, *On Syntax* I,2, 2.11ff.; tr. Blank 1983:30).

The rational and regular structure of language makes it possible for the grammarian to deduce rules according to strictly rational principles, rational orderliness being the main criterion for linguistic correctness. Other criteria are the established usage of cultivated people, literary precedents, and the authority of previous scholars. All these criteria are used to track down and diagnose phenomena of "grammatical irregularity" (*tò akatállēlon*), and to establish the "regularity of the complete sentence" (*katallēlótēs toũ autoteloũs lógou*).

A sentence is "regular" (*katállēlos*) if all its parts are syntactically congru-

ent and semantically compatible. "Regularity" (*katallēlótēs*) refers to the mutual relationships of the constituents of a sentence; it is the notion into which symmetry of structure and semantics merge. In fact, syntax—the Greek word *súntaxis* means no more than the combination/collocation of words, or constituents—is a function of semantics. The reason why certain words can be combined, whereas others yield an ungrammatical construction, must be sought on the level of meaning.

The central portion of the *On Syntax* (the opening section of book III) is devoted to an explanation of the phenomenon of ungrammaticality. What are its causes? Words have a certain (lexical) meaning, but apart from that they also carry information imparted through inflection (e.g. tense, voice, mood, number, case, gender). Two words will be regularly and grammatically construed if all information conveyed by them is compatible (*On Syntax* III,14, 280.1ff.). If a word is unmarked for a certain category (e.g. an indeclinable part of speech like the adverb is unmarked for case), it cannot be incompatible with information conveyed by that category in the rest of the sentence, because it cannot be demonstrated to be incorrect by the substitution of a better alternative (III,17, 282.1ff.). This is expressed e.g. in the phrase:

> "No part of speech can be ungrammatical in respect of a category which it fails to distinguish" (*oudèn méros lógou gínetai akatállēlon en hōĩ mḕ diekríthē*, *On Syntax* III,51, 316.10ff.; tr. Householder).

Adverbs are usually not marked for tense, since they are indeclinable. Therefore, the adverb 'here' can be construed with all tenses. But a word like 'yesterday' does convey a temporal sense in its lexical meaning, and this explains why it cannot be construed with a future tense.

'Meaning' and 'intelligibles' are the substance of regularity, but they are emphatically tied to the level of the expression. If someone points at a woman and complains 'he has beaten me', nothing is wrong with the grammaticality and regularity of the sentence. *Katallēlótēs* is definitely a characteristic of language rather than a function of the relation between language and reality. The same plaintiff exclaiming: 'she have beaten me' does produce an ungrammatical sentence, even if he successfully points out the culprit:

> "For irregularity or regularity are not to be found in the substance of discourse (*toĩs hupokeiménois*), but in the combination of the words" (*ou gàr en toĩs hupokeiménois tò akatállēlón estin ḕ katállēlon, en dè tēĩ suntáxei tõn léxeōn*, *On Syntax* III,10, 275.6ff.).

Apollonius' problem-solving approach is diagnostic in nature: even though an expression seems to be familiar and in order, it can still be incorrect, and

the grammarian who follows Apollonius' logical principles will be able to demonstrate this. He will reveal incorrect usage by substituting a (more) correct alternative. Thus, correct usage refutes the incorrect, a principle styled *élenkhos*.

Apollonius' view of language is normative. Originally, language was in perfect regular order and there was a one-to-one relationship between words and meanings. However, that order has been disturbed and corrupted over time. The grammarian needs to understand the basic regularity in order to be able to correct mistakes, or to explain the rules underlying an aberration. On the other hand, Apollonius is no reformer nor does he demand a return to the pristine state of language. He wants to understand the linguistic system and to correct those (new) mistakes which are not integral to linguistic usage already. He shows, for instance, that the Greek idiom which construes a neuter plural subject with a predicate in the singular is strictly speaking irregular, but he does not propose to abolish it (*On Syntax* III,50, 315.16ff.; Schenkeveld 1994:295ff.). In order to explain the 'regular meaning' of a given Greek sentence, he has to take recourse to a paraphrase in normalized Greek, which purports to represent as regularly as possible all aspects of the meaning of the sentence in question (in fact, the *lektón*). Such paraphrases or translations into structurally perspicuous, truly regular sentences are called *tò hexẽs*, "the orderly version". Here, the original one-to-one correspondence between words and meanings is artificially restored.

It will be clear from the foregoing that Apollonius works with the Stoic dichotomy between sounds (*phōnaí*) and meanings (*sēmainómena*). His three minor works reflect this dichotomy in their structure. Apollonius always opens with a discussion of the various definitions and names for a given part of speech, their syntax (or place in the sentence) and examples of words which may or may not belong to this particular part of speech. All of this comes under the heading of "sense, meaning" (*énnoia*); notice especially that this also holds good for syntax. After that he will turn to a discussion of the morphology of the relevant part of speech (*skhẽma tẽs phōnẽs*).

Meaning is always intrinsically more important than form. Not only is it the determining factor in establishing grammatical regularity (*katallēlótēs*), it is also meaning which is decisive for assigning a word to one part of speech rather than another (*merismós*). Forms of words may undergo various changes, but these cannot affect their meaning. In this sense, Apollonius is an interesting illustration of the fact that ancient grammar mainly concentrates on two levels, the morphological one (cf. his interest in parsing (*merismós*)),

and the semanto-logical one (cf. his interest in meaning). Syntax in our sense of the word, as a purely grammatico-structural phenomenon, hardly plays any role.

10. Augustine: semantics and theology

Augustine (354–430 CE) was well-versed in pagan scholarship, although he had had a slow start. Before his conversion to Christianity, he specialized in rhetoric. After his conversion, he wrote on the liberal arts (treatises on grammar and dialectic are extant) and developed a programme for a Christian education. His ideas on language and the problem of meaning are deeply influenced by previous philosophical scholarship, although heavily filtered through Roman sources and schooltexts. Augustine's command of Greek was poor and he is not likely to have studied the relevant sources (especially the Stoic ones) in any great depth. The resulting theories are thoroughly Christianized and often original. The works that are most relevant here are *On Dialectic* (386–7 CE), *On the Teacher* (ca. 389), *On Christian Culture* (397, part of book 3 and all of book 4 was written in 427), and *On the Trinity* (415).

In *On Dialectic* Augustine is the first firmly to incorporate the study of the linguistic sign into a general theory of signs; in Hellenistic philosophy language had never been regarded as the system of signs *par excellence*, although a theory of sign-inference had been important in both Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Augustine identifies the word as the locus for meaning. A word is the smallest combination of signifier and signified. This latter dichotomy is Stoic in origin, but Augustine's application of the theory is new in that Stoic theory had no place for the concept of 'word' at all. They distinguished strings of articulated sound (*léxis*) and meaningful articulated sound as found in a proposition (*lógos*). Augustine's theory is a blend of Stoic philosophical influence and Roman school grammar, which focused entirely on words.

On Dialectic refines the Latin terminology to express the distinctions that apply to any given expression: a word (*verbum*) qua physical sound (*sonus*) is opposed to that aspect that is grasped not by the ears, but by the mind, the *dicibile* "sayable", a calque on the Stoic *lektón*, although *lektón* is never related to words in isolation. The referent is distinct from this "meaning": it is called *res*, equivalent to Greek *prãgma* in the trivial, non-Stoic sense. A further distinction is made between words that are used to refer to themselves, in which case their *res* is equivalent to *verbum*, and words which are

not used autonomously, but to signify something else: in that case the technical term is *dictio* (*On Dialectic* 5). Any given word is therefore a nodal point in which four aspects converge: *verbum*, *dicibile*, *dictio* and *res*. Augustine is the first systematically to distinguish 'use' and 'mention' of a word in his terminology.

Aristotelian influence may be detected in Augustine's view that written language is a sign of spoken language:

> "Every word is a sound, for when it is written it is not a word but the sign of a word" (*Omne verbum sonat. Cum enim est in scripto, non verbum sed verbi signum est*, *On Dialectic* 5; tr. Jackson).

In the dialogue *On the Teacher* the relationship between language and knowledge is investigated. The two basic functions of language are to teach (cf. Plato) and to remind, but after a first half in which it is argued that it is impossible to learn anything without signs, the second half of the dialogue leads to an impasse: for it is argued that signs are learned and understood from the things of which they are signs, and not vice versa (X,33). We need knowledge, before we can understand signs. Therefore, language by itself cannot teach us anything. The solution to this dilemma is theological: getting to know intelligibles can only come about through revelation. The interior teacher is the Word, Christ, who "can teach by at once displaying to the mind the reality to be known and providing the language for its understanding" (Markus 1957:69) (cf. *On the Teacher* XII,39).

Some of these ideas are further developed in *On the Trinity*, when Augustine comes to reflect on the nature of the Word. The 'interior word' is an abstract concept in that it is unrelated to any particular language (in that sense it resembles the 'Form' or 'Idea' (*eĩdos*) of the first theory of meaning in the *Cratylus* (see above, Section 6). The "word which is luminous inside" (*verbum quod intus lucet*) is opposed to its external realisation, the "word heard sounding outside" (*verbum quod foris sonat*) (*On the Trinity* XV,11.20; Markus 1957:77). Communication is realized because the internal word in the interlocutor's mind is activated by speech addressed to him. The distinction is reminiscent of the theory of "internal" and "expressed reason/discourse", the *lógos endiáthetos* and the *lógos prophorikós*.

On Christian Culture is the first systematic attempt to develop a Christian curriculum, preparing for an adequate interpretation of the Bible. The process of communication is described as follows:

> "When we speak, the word that we carry in our hearts turns into sound, in order that what we carry in our mind may glide into the mind of the hearer through his carnal ears. It

is called expression. However, it is not our thought that is converted into that same sound, but our thought remains intact with itself; it takes on the form of the words in which it insinuates itself into the ears, without being affected by any kind of internal change" (*cum loquimur, ut id quod animo gerimus in audientis animum per aures carneas illabatur, fit sonus verbum quod corde gestamus, et locutio vocatur; nec tamen in eundem sonum cogitatio nostra convertitur, sed apud se manens integra, formam vocis qua se insinuet auribus, sine aliqua labe suae mutationis assumit*, *On Christian Culture* I,13.12).

Discourse is a transfer of thought from one mind to the other through the temporary physical medium of sound. The fact that the internal word, thought, remains intact and complete is important because of the analogy with the Incarnation of God's Word. The general framework for the interpretation of the Bible is equally determined by religious considerations: the starting-point for every interpretation is love of God and of one's neighbour, and the triad faith, hope and love (I,35.39; 37.41ff.).

In the following books (especially book II) Augustine takes up the theory of signs, of which words are the prime examples. He draws a distinction between "signs" (*signa*) and "things" (*res*), pointing out that signs are things, too, but that not all things are signs. In the case of words, it is almost exclusively their nature of being signs that is relevant. A sign is defined as follows:

"A sign … is a thing which, in addition to what it is perceived to be by the senses also brings something else to mind" (*signum … est res, praeter speciem quam ingerit sensibus aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire*, *On Christian Culture* II,1.1; tr. Markus 1957:71).

Signs can be divided into 'natural' ones and 'given' ones. Words belong to the latter class, and derive their meaning from convention, or consensus.

After a discussion of the general education necessary to the would-be interpreter of the Bible, Augustine devotes the third book to the problem of ambiguity. Some contexts are not immediately transparent and it is imperative that the exegete know how to deal with these. In literal expressions, ambiguity will usually be solved by the context, a comparison of different translations or a comparison with the original (III,4.8). To prevent error and heresy, it is crucial to be able to determine when a text is to be taken literally and when figuratively (III,5.9; 10.14). In this book he integrates pagan hermeneutics and pagan education in a completely Christian framework. His criteria are in part familiar from the pagan tradition (cf. above), e.g. if the surface meaning of the text yields an unacceptable meaning, it should be interpreted allegorically. The historical framework should be taken into account, so that

something which can be taken literally in the time in which it was written should not be interpreted allegorically in Augustine's time (III,22.32) (a principle already known to Aristotle and to Aristarchus). Augustine also advocates the principle of explaining the Bible from the Bible (e.g. III,27.38f.). However, his particular slant is completely Christianized, the final test being whether or not a text is compatible with the prime directives of love of God and of one's neighbour (III,10.14). It is very interesting that Augustine stipulates explicitly that the text of the Bible can carry more than one meaning simultaneously: all these meanings have been foreseen and intended by the Holy Spirit (III,27.38).

Augustine's unique achievement was to adopt and adapt the pagan philosophical heritage in such a way that it came to be an acceptable basis for the Christian Middle Age. This goes in particular for the analogies he sees between the human word and the Word, second person of the Holy Trinity, which preserves its integrity and completeness while it is transferred through a physical medium from one person to another. Communication and revelation are put on an analogical footing.

11. Semantics and translations

Early Greek exegetical techniques included paraphrase and the replacement of difficult poetical words with more ordinary prosaic ones. Translation of a word into synonymous expressions (*metálēpsis*) was to remain common scholiast practice, and it was an important way to establish the semantic content of a word for a grammarian like Apollonius Dyscolus (cf. Sluiter 1990:111ff.). The Greek dialects, too, posed problems of 'translation' into the dominant Attic or Koine. However, translations from foreign languages into Greek or vice versa are virtually absent from Greek linguistic thought. The Greeks did not have any particular systematic interest in other languages, although one does find the incidental comparison of words, and although there must have been numerous interpreters in cosmopolitan cities like Athens and Alexandria. Very little by way of linguistic comparison is to be found in Greek technical literature. Where literary works are concerned, Herodotus has incidental remarks about the words other people use for certain phenomena, and Aristophanes pokes fun at the incomprehensible gibberish of foreigners (e.g. in his *Acharnians*). Other tongues were styled "barbarian", and were compared to animal sounds (especially twittering birds, e.g. Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1050–53, cf. Sluiter 1990:206).

In fact, mutual incomprehension between Greeks and foreigners, rather than the possibility of translation is what one finds mainly stressed in the theoretical literature about language. Greeks can perceive the sounds of a barbarian language, they can distinguish the vocal inflections, but that does not give them the knowledge of an interpreter, i.e. the meaning of the words remains obscure to them (Plato *Theaetetus* 163b1ff.). Earlier, Heraclitus had already pointed out that eyes and ears are poor witnesses if one has a barbarian soul, i.e. if the sense-data fail to be interpreted correctly (Fr. B 107). The Stoics define 'meaning' with reference to its availability to "foreigners" (*bárbaroi*): they hear the sounds (*phōnḗ*) which carry the meaning, but are still unable to grasp it (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.12). In fact this proves that *phōnḗ* as such is meaningless: if it were meaningful, perceiving the sounds would entail grasping the meaning, but in fact foreigners (*bárbaroi*) are unable to do this (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.134, cf. 1.155). Sextus uses the same point to prove that discourse does not signify "by nature" (*phúsei*). This appears from the fact that not everyone understands everyone else, but that there is a mutual lack of communication between Greeks and foreigners, and even between Greeks and Greeks, and foreigners and foreigners (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 1.37f., cf. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 2.214 and 3.267). This link between the conventional nature of language and the fact that writing and sounds are not the same for everyone goes back to Plato (*Cratylus* 385d9ff.) and Aristotle's *On Interpretation* 1 (16a4ff.).

The first major translation project in the Greek world was that of the Septuagint (2nd century BCE), but no theory of translation was required at that point, because it was claimed that the Greek end-result itself was the product of divine inspiration, seventy-two translators having separately and independently produced an identical version.

For explicit theories of translation we have to wait until the Romans, who used Greek as a metalanguage, whenever they were talking about the Latin language. This goes especially for the Roman grammarians, but it is also evident from observations like those of Augustine, who notices that some expressions are ambiguous, because they mean one thing in Greek and another in Latin (e.g. *lege* is Greek for "read" (imperative) and Latin for "law" (in the ablative case), *On Christian Culture* I,24.37). This is, of course, a late example (end 4th century CE), but right from the beginning the Romans were very conscious of the existence of Greek as a 'Kultursprache'; indeed, for a long time it was not certain whether Latin would ever acquire

a similar status in its own right. A Roman annalist like Fabius Pictor (3rd/2nd century BCE) wrote his works directly in Greek. The first Latin poet was in fact a Greek, Livius Andronicus, who translated the *Odyssey* into Latin (3rd century BCE). Early comic poets, like Plautus (250–184 BCE) and Terence (2nd century BCE), heavily relied on Greek examples and translated parts of them, although they managed to produce something new and uniquely Roman in the process. Terence has the prologue-speaker in his *Adelphoe* recommend him for the faithfulness of his translation:

"He has translated it word for word" (*verbum de verbo expressum extulit*, *Adelphoe* 11).

In the 1st century BCE we find more theoretical reflections on the process of translation as such. It is once again the translation of Greek poetry that triggers Horace's remark that one should not be too compulsive about following one's model (*Ars Poetica* 133). The project of giving the Romans their own philosophical terminology was undertaken by Cicero and Lucretius. Cicero frequently reflects on this enterprise, and he feels strongly that one should not be too literal-minded while translating. Incidentally he will suggest a word-for-word (*verbum e verbo*) isomorphic translation (e.g. *Lucullus* 17), which amounts to a calque, e.g. *conprehensio* for Greek *katálēpsis*. Usually, however, he is disparaging about this behaviour which befits a mere interpreter: he prefers remodelling his example as an orator should (*On the Best Type of Orator* 14; *de Finibus* 3.15): he wants to translate not the words, but the force, the meaning (*non verba, sed vim*, *Academica* 1.10). Neologisms are not forbidden, but one should look for a natural equivalent, paraphrase if necessary, or take over a Greek word as a technical term (*de Finibus* 3.15). The 1st-century-CE philosopher Seneca agrees with him in his rejection of word-for-word isomorphism:

"This abiding stability of mind the Greeks call 'euthymia', 'well-being of the soul' …; I call it tranquillity. For there is no need to imitate and reproduce words in their Greek shape; the thing itself, which is under discussion, must be designated by some name which ought to have, not the form, but the force, of the Greek term" (*Hanc stabilem animi sedem Graeci euthymian vocant …; ego tranquillitatem voco. Nec enim imitari et transferre verba ad illorum formam necesse est; res ipsa, de qua agitur, aliquo signanda nomine est, quod appellationis Graecae vim debet habere, non faciem*, *On Tranquillity of Mind* 2.3).

And when looking for a translation of the Greek *apátheia* "non-suffering" in the sense of "freedom from affections and emotional disturbances", he equally rejects the formation of the calque *impatientia* ("non-suffering"; the word was already in use as "impatience") (*Letters to Lucilius* 9.2).

In the Roman world, too, the translation of the Bible was a major event. Jerome (4th century CE), who translated the Bible into Latin, composes a long letter which forms a treatise on the best style of translation (*Letters* 57). The letter was not instigated by his translation of the Bible, however, but was written after he had been attacked for a sloppy translation of a Greek letter. In his defense, he firmly places himself in the tradition of Horace, Cicero and Seneca, rejecting a literalistic approach in favour of one aiming to convey the intention of the words. He makes an exception for Bible translations, which, however, is not always reflected in his actual translations (cf. Bartelink 1980):

> "For not only do I admit, but I even freely proclaim that when I translate Greek texts, with the exception of Holy Scripture where even the word order is a mystery, I do not translate word-for-word, but meaning for meaning" (*Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*, *Letters* 57.5)

Augustine thought Jerome's translation was rather too free, and preferred the old-fashioned Itala on the grounds that it "clung more closely to the words" (*est verborum tenacior*) "while the intention is clear" (*cum perspicuitate sententiae*, *On Christian Culture* II,15.22. This combination is obviously the most ideal.

Clearly, the opposition between words and meanings was completely internalized by the 1st century BCE. It was also realized that a preference for a translation *ad sensum* would enhance the literary quality of the translation (this is Jerome's point), while a literal translation shows the faithfulness of the plodding interpreter. As so often, the ideal solution was the middle road.

12. Conclusion

In this essay we have tried to show the central role of meaning in Greek linguistic thought. In a way, the earliest emergence of linguistic concerns in the form of etymology set the tone for what was to come. Etymology was a strategy to get a sense of control over a baffling world, an attempt to understand the world through language. It focused on single words, especially names. Interpretation of larger contexts is attested at an early stage in the form of explaining dreams and oracles, taken as divine communications.

Once the focus of attention, the nature of language kept occupying the Greek intellectuals: its potential for persuasion and entertainment was ex-

plored by the sophists, who lay the foundation of theoretical rhetoric and poetical theory. The relationship between language and knowledge, and language and the outside world occupied the philosophers who started where the poets had left off. Plato feels compelled to address these problems, because contemporary speculation seemed to undermine the whole enterprise of dialectic. The first of the two theories of meaning put forward in the *Cratylus* locates meaning in the ideal Form of a name, which the name-giver has to keep in view. Alternatively, a name is felt to represent the namegiver's view of reality. Plato assigns language its proper place in the dialectical process: it is its instrument and vehicle, but it does not form a fit object for research in and of itself, nor is it a reliable source of information about the world: at best, it represents the name-givers' opinions of the world. In the *Sophist*, it is recognized that propositional meaning (and, therefore, truth and falsity) resides, not in the single word, but in a syntactically complete sentence.

Aristotle agrees that language can represent established opinion, but in his eyes common opinions and expressions form a legitimate starting-point for philosophical inquiry. However, he does not endorse reliance on etymology, which can only be used as a back-up argument, not in the course of establishing scholarly proof. Aristotle's view of language as a conventional symbolic, rather than mimetic, system was to revolutionize linguistic thought. In his mentalistic view, language signifies the speaker's thoughts.

In the Hellenistic period, important contributions to the theory of meaning were made by the Epicureans, but especially by the Stoics. Their radical distinction between form and meaning, not in the context of the single word—which plays no role whatsoever—, but in that of the proposition came to form part of the common stock of linguistic concepts at the disposal of every educated Greek. Meaning is something incorporeal, subsistent on thought, that has the potential to be expressed in language—hence its name: "sayable" (*lektón*). Now that meaning was recognized as having an identity of its own, different from sound, concept or thing, theoretically the way was made clear for a purely linguistic approach to semantics, as opposed to a logical one; however, this was not to happen in Antiquity. Both the Stoics and the Epicureans had good philosophical motives for studying language: misunderstanding this vehicle for thought was a severe threat to the ultimate attainment of a philosopher's happiness.

In the same period, the Museum at Alexandria was established, Center for Hellenic Studies *avant la lettre*, where philology was the intellectual fashion of the day, because it was the instrument to preserve the cultural inheritance

of archaic and classical Greece. The interpretation of the poets, Homer prominent among them, had always formed part of the Greek intellectual tradition and the school curriculum. Now, it became a separate discipline, philology. Apart from lexicography, interpretive principles were established to determine whether the texts of the great poets were in good order. Philosophers and doctors followed the intellectual trend, and applied the tools of philology to write commentaries and lexica on the authoritative works from their respective traditions, Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.

This whole tradition of studying the meaning of language in whichever form, was probably one of the main reasons why no Greek equivalent of a purely structural syntax ever emerged. Language was either studied at the basic level of the single word, or for its communicative or logical value. The intermediate stage was not skipped altogether, but observations pertaining to the formal syntactic structure of language are rather incidental. The word 'syntax' had been around for a long time, but meant no more than the combination or the collocation of lexical items to achieve a certain effect. This focus on the meaning of language, on its communicative function, is also central to the work of the 'syntactician' Apollonius Dyscolus, in which semantical concerns came to form the basis of a theory of grammatical regularity (*katallēlótēs*). He focuses mainly on the construction of the complete sentence, expressing a complete meaning.

In the work of Augustine, a synthesis is achieved between the pagan philosophical, rhetorical and philological tradition, and Christian religion: he develops a Christian curriculum for the ideal exegete of the Bible. Augustine is the first to make a clear distinction between 'use' and 'mention'. He explicitly redirects the search for meaning to the individual word, in a confirmation of the fact that the Stoics' concentration on the incorporeal proposition had been unable to win the day in school-practice.

Ancient theories of translation, the last topic briefly discussed here, corroborate the fact that form-meaning distinctions had been completely absorbed into ancient linguistic thought. Not surprisingly, a translation that stays close to the 'Wortlaut' of the original while at the same time completely conveying its meaning and intention, is generally preferred.

13. Suggestions for further reading

1. The best general introduction to the Greek grammatical tradition is probably still Steinthal (1890–91) and Pfeiffer (1968). A brief survey of ancient

views on 'meaning' is to be found in Calboli (1992). Manetti (1987) discusses ancient theories of signs. Di Cesare (1980) deals with ancient philosophical theories of meaning (up to and including the Epicureans, but without the Stoics).

2. For Greek grammatical terminology, see also Bécares Botas (1985).

3. See Kraus (1987) on the relationships between words and things. Amsler (1989) deals with etymology; he focuses mainly on later antiquity, but gives a useful survey of earlier material. Good general discussion of etymology in Herbermann 1991. Rank (1951) is still indispensable on Homeric etymology; on Homeric names, Peradotto (1990) is good. Leclerc (1993) deals with Hesiod's views on language and names. For Aristotle's use of etymology, see Eucken (1869:246)

4. For pre-Alexandrian exegetical techniques, see Manetti (1987) (on signs); Sluiter (1994) (Themistocles' interpretation of the Delphic oracle). Paraphrastic techniques and glosses in Plato: Bottin (1975). On allegory: Buffière (1956), who is also indispensable for Homeric interpretations in antiquity in general; Whitman (1987), see also under 8.

5. General survey of linguistic ideas in the Pre-Socratics in Schmitter (1991) and Di Cesare (1980); on Heraclitus' theory of meaning, see Hussey (1982). For the sophists, see Di Cesare (1991), for Prodicus, Momigliano (1929–30), for Gorgias, Kraus (1987:171ff.) and Di Cesare (1991:95f.). Heinimann (1945 (1972)) is still fundamental on the opposition *nómos—phúsis*, characteristic of the intellectual outlook of the period.

6. Derbolav (1972) provides a survey of the extensive literature on Plato's *Cratylus*. Goldschmidt's essay (1940) is still important. Of the more recent literature, see especially Denyer (1991) on the problem of truth and falsehood, and Baxter (1992) on the theory of names and the etymological section.

7. Excellent overview of the Aristotelian philosophy of language in Ax (1992), see also Flashar (1983). Arens (1984) discusses the vital first section of *On Interpretation*, for which see further Montanari (1984; 1988) and Weidemann (1994).

8. For Hellenistic philosophy, see Long & Sedley 1987, who collect the most important sources with translations and commentary. On Stoic semantics, see Frede (1978), Egli (1986), Sluiter (1990:13ff. and forthc.) and Hülser (1992). Schenkeveld (1984:326–31) discusses the parallels between the Stoic

theory of *lektá* and Searle's speech act theory. For Stoic allegoresis, Steinmetz (1986), Most (1989) and Long (1992). Epicurean semantics is discussed in Long (1971), Sedley (1973), and Hossenfelder (1991). Glidden (1983) takes a different view from the one expounded here. For Alexandrian philology, see, apart from Pfeiffer (1968), Callanan (1987) with the critical discussion and corrections in Schenkeveld (1990). On the *Techne* ascribed to Dionysius Thrax, see Law and Sluiter (1995).

9. Apollonius Dyscolus *On Syntax* is available in the English version by Householder (1981) (a new translation is being prepared by Jean Lallot). For discussions of Apollonius' semantic views, see Blank (1982 and 1993), and Sluiter (1990). Van Ophuijsen (1993) provides a discussion of some of the relevant technical terms from the semantic field of 'meaning', notably *prãgma*, *diáthesis*, *énnoia*, and *paremphaínein* and related terms.

10. Rotta (1909) discusses theories of language in patristic authors. For Augustine, see especially Markus (1957) and Baratin (1981); further Gangutía (1977) and Manetti (1987).

11. On ancient theories of translation, see Bartelink (1980). On the general issue, of course, Steiner (1992[2]).

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Part Four

THE ARABIC TRADITION

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"The other, was a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever: and this was urged as a great advantage in point of health as well as brevity. For, it is plain that every word we speak is in some degree a diminution of our lungs by corrosion; and consequently contributes to the shortning of our lives. An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for *things*, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them, such *things* as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on" (Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726, Wordsworth Classics, pp. 197–98)

1 Introduction

In the period roughly between 750 and 1500 CE more than 4,000 scholars whose names we know of were active in the study of the Arabic language in the Arab world. Hundreds of treatises from this tradition have been preserved and thousands of treatises must have been written that did not survive. Geographically the study of Arabic was undertaken in regions as far apart as Muslim Spain and Transoxania in Central Asia. The centre of linguistic study was Iraq, at first in the newly founded garrison cities of Basra and Kufa, later in the capital of the ʿAbbāsid empire, Baghdad. After the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 CE, other centres took over this role, especially Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Kairouan and Granada. One could even say that the Arabic linguistic tradition never stopped, since even nowadays the grammatical treatises are still part of the curriculum of traditional Islamic universities such as the Azhar in Cairo. It is true, however, that in the 20th century the impact of Western linguistics has supplanted the traditional approach to grammar in most departments of linguistics, especially in Egypt, Morocco and the Gulf States. On the other hand, it is not an exaggeration when we say that in the study of Arabic the traditional orientation continues to be alive, especially in the field of semantics.

If one looks up the Arabic equivalent of the English term 'meaning' in a dictionary, one will probably find the word *maʿnā*, from the radicals *ʿ-n-y*

"to mean, to intend". This is the central notion in Arabic semantic theory, although it is certainly not the only one. In a recent dictionary of linguistic terminology, for instance, one finds as equivalent for the Western term 'semantics' the Arabic term *ʿilm ad-dalāla*, from the root *d-l-l*, meaning "to indicate, to signify". This term derives from one specific approach to meaning in the Arabic tradition. A discussion of semantics in Arabic grammar may therefore take the term *maʿnā* as its point of departure, but it should not lose sight of the existence of other terminological sets, especially the one derived from the radicals *d-l-l*. It is also important to keep in mind the antonym of *maʿnā*, *lafẓ*, which always indicates a physical correlate of whatever *maʿnā* stands for.

Even apart from the terminological confusion, there is a methodological problem. The lexical equivalence between 'meaning' and *maʿnā* may suffice for a dictionary, but in a historiographical analysis it obscures the issue. 'Meaning' is at once a broader and a narrower notion than *maʿnā* and it would not do to simply equate the two. One approach could be to start from the notion of 'meaning' and trace its various applications in Western linguistics to terms and notions in Arabic grammar. Another approach might be to start from the term *maʿnā*, sketch its various applications, and relate them to Western usage. Basically, we shall follow the latter approach here and give a full account of the various uses of the term *maʿnā*, even when the connection with semantic theory is very loose, as, for instance, in Muʿtazilite theology. Other terms having to do with the semantic component of language will be introduced in the course of the discussion whenever appropriate.

Arab grammarians hardly ever deal explicitly with the notion of *maʿnā*, and very few definitions are found in the literature. For most scholars *maʿnā* was simply some kind of corollary to the formal expression of speech, which could be taken for granted without any discussion. This common sense approach to meaning, which is typical of grammarians in the Arabic tradition, sharply contrasts with the detailed analysis of meaning by logicians, rhetoricians and semioticians. One might even say that by and large Arabic linguistics is characterized by a formalistic approach to language, which regards the semantic side of speech as something self-evident, without any place in the structural analysis.

A few definitions by grammarians are mentioned in the literature reflecting two different trends of dealing with semantics. Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) states that the term *maʿnā* means *qaṣd* "intention, aim", or *murād* "that which you want [to say]" in accordance with the lexical meaning of the root *ʿ-n-y*, "to

intend'' (*Maqāyīs* IV, 148f.; cf. Frank 1981:267–68). Along the same lines we find in ar-Rummānī's (d. 384/994) treatise on definitions the following definition of the dichotomy *maʿnā/lafẓ*:

> ''Meaning: a purpose which is clarified by the expression. Expression: speech coming out of the mouth. Speech: those sounds which by their composition signify a meaning'' (*al-maʿnā: maqṣad yaqaʿu l-bayān ʿanhu bi-l-lafẓ; al-lafẓ: kalām yaḫruğu min al-fam; al-kalām: mā kāna min al-ḥurūf dāllan bi-taʾlīfihi ʿalā maʿnan*, *Ḥudūd* 42.10–12)

In the same vein is the definition given by ʾAbū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. 684/1285):

> ''*Maʿnā* is the purpose with which an utterance is used in a specific way; the expression 'the *maʿnā* of speech' is used for that which is connected with the intention'' (*ʾinna l-maʿnā huwa l-qaṣd allaḏī yaqaʿu bihi l-qawl ʿalā wağh dūna wağh wa-qad yakūnu maʿnā l-kalām fī l-luġa mā taʿallaqa bihi l-qaṣd*, *Furūq* 25; cf. Kouloughli 1983:45)

The second type of 'definition' is the one the lexicographer al-ʾAzharī (d. 370/980) attributes to the Kufan grammarian Ṯaʿlab (d. 291/904), who is quoted as having stated that

> ''meaning and explanation and interpretation amount to the same thing'' (*al-maʿnā wa-t-tafsīr wa-t-taʾwīl wāḥid*, *Lisān* XV, 106).

One could say that these two definitions represent two different approaches towards the semantic component of speech. In Ibn Fāris' definition the main emphasis is on the intention of the speaker. The aim of speech is communication, and the *maʿnā* is quite simply that which you want to say, using speech as the medium of communication. In the second definition, on the other hand, meaning is something inherent in speech itself, which can be brought out by a process of interpretation by an exegete or a linguist. This is not to say, of course, that the two approaches are independent of each other. Obviously, in using speech the speaker must make use of the inherent, conventional meaning, and conversely, in analysing speech the interpreter must take into account the intention of the speaker. Moreover, they share a significant common feature: both approaches leave the extra-linguistic referent out of the discussion of the function of meaning. The main difference between the two definitions concerns their different point of view as to where the study of meaning should start, with the intention of the speaker or with the linguistic structure.

In Kouloughli's analysis (1983) of the terminology of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* the same two trends are distinguished in somewhat different terms. According to Kouloughli, the intentionalist interpretation of 'meaning' is characterized

by the fact that it does not look upon the *maʿnā* "meaning" as a correlate of the *lafẓ* "form, expression", but as an independent process: the aiming at a certain intention. The distinction of a dichotomy 'form/meaning' in the sense of the modern distinction between 'signifiant/signifié', in which meaning is a static entity representing the reverse side of the phonetic expression, belongs to the second type of approach. This distinction did not become fully operational until the writings of al-Ǧurǧānī (5th/11th century).

It may be added here that most traditional Arab grammarians are much more familiar with the second approach to meaning. Most of them pay lip-service to the role of language as a medium of communication for our thoughts, since that is the reason why God created speech (or, according to some, the faculty of speech which enabled man to invent speech). In az-Zağǧāǧī we find for instance the following statement with respect to the function of speech:

> "We know that God Almighty made speech so that His servants could express what was on their minds and talk to each other about what was in their thoughts, inasmuch as this could not be indicated by pointing or signaling or winking an eye or any other means" (*wa-naḥnu naʿlamu ʾanna llāha ʿazza wa-ǧalla ʾinnamā ǧaʿala l-kalām li-yuʿabbira bihi l-ʿibād ʿammā haǧasa fī nufūsihim wa-ḫāṭaba bihi baʿḍuhum baʿḍan bimā fī ḍamāʾiri-him mimmā lā yūqafu ʿalayhi bi-ʾišāra wa-lā ʾīmāʾ wa-lā ramz bi-ḥāǧib wa-lā ḥīla min al-ḥiyal*, *ʾĪḍāḥ* 42.11–13)

But in the actual analysis of language even az-Zağǧāği then returns to the use of *maʿnā* in the sense of semantic correlate of the phonetic expression within a linguistic theory. As we shall see below, the grammarians did retain the memory of the first sense of *maʿnā*, "intention of the speaker", in particular when they sometimes called the underlying structure of speech *maʿnā*, implying that it was somehow nearer to the real intention of the speaker.

The two approaches mentioned here are not the only aspects of meaning which play a role in the scientific study of language in the Arabic tradition. In the course of our discussion we shall come across the following aspects of the notion of *maʿnā*, which may or may not occur together in the same writer:

- linked with the speaker:
  1. the intention of the speaker or his purpose in making an utterance (related terms *maqṣūd*, *qaṣd*, *murād*, *niyya*, all meaning "intention")
- linked with the message:
  2. the message which the hearer extracts from speech (related term *mafhūm* "what is understood")

3. the equivalent of an expression or utterance, i.e., its interpretive analysis or paraphrase (related terms *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, both meaning "explanation")
4. the motif or theme of a poem (related term *ġaraḍ* "purpose")
5. the intent or the mood of the sentence (especially in the phrase *maʿānī l-kalām* "meanings of speech")
6. the communicative purpose of speech (related term *fā'ida* "advantage")

- linked with the extra-linguistic world:
  7. the referent in the extra-linguistic world (related term *musammā* "what is named")
  8. the intrinsic causal determinant of accidents in physical objects, or qualifier (in Mu'tazilite thinking, related term *ʿilla* "cause")

- linked with thought:
  9. the conceptual correlate of a word, phrase or sentence
  10. the essential qualities of an object that are perceived by the mind in the sense of the Aristotelian form
  11. abstract correlate of physical objects in the sense of the Platonic ideas

- linked with the linguistic sign:
  12. the semantic content of a set of radicals, its lexical meaning
  13. the underlying structure of a surface sentence (related terms *'aṣl* "origin, principle", *taqdīr* "assigning")
  14. the function of a morphological or syntactic category (related term *mawḍiʿ* "position")
  15. abstract notion (vs. concrete notion, in the expression *ism maʿnā* "abstract noun" vs. *ism ʿayn* "concrete noun")
  16. that for which an expression has been established (in the theory of the *waḍʿ al-luġa* "imposition of speech")

Not all aspects enumerated here are equally relevant to our purpose here, but they will all recur in the discussion of the various trends in the Arabic tradition. In that discussion we shall not limit ourselves to the science of grammar in the strictest sense. Other disciplines, such as logic, rhetoric and the discipline of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh* "principles of law", made important contributions to the analysis of the semantic aspect of speech, and one could even say that without these contributions the Arabic linguistic tradition would not be particularly illuminating with respect to meaning or semantics. The science of the principles of law, for instance, was based on a semiotic analysis of

speech acts, and in the 5th/11th century the Arabic rhetoricians achieved an integration of semantic and formal aspects of speech that would have been inconceivable in linguistics proper.

One aspect of semantics, the study of the lexical meaning of words, is completely absent from the treatises of the grammarians. The emergence of a separate discipline of lexicology or lexicography dealing with the meaning of words is linked with the early exegetical activities. Lexicology in Islam grew out of the specialized vocabularies of Qur'ānic words or thematic ones, such as the various treatises on the names of the camel, the horse, etc., which were compiled by scholars from the 1st century of the Islamic period onwards. Later, these vocabularies developed into real dictionaries, starting with al-Ḫalīl's (d. 175/791) *Kitāb al-ʿayn*; the science that studied the lexical meanings maintained a certain independence from the science of grammar. It is true that most grammarians studied lexicology (*ʿilm al-luġa*) simultaneously with their grammatical studies, and conversely, most lexicographers were trained in grammar as well. But the Islamic tradition kept the two disciplines apart, so that it could, for instance, be said of a scholar that he did well in grammar but knew nothing about lexicology. Because of this division of tasks the contribution of Arabic lexicography towards the development of a semantic theory is small.

It is of interest to note here that, unlike the Greek tradition, the Arabo-Islamic study of words did not develop an epistemological dimension by applying the knowledge of words to the knowledge of things. The Arabic equivalent of 'etymology', *ištiqāq* (literally "splitting"), is solely concerned with the morphological derivation of a word, i.e., the determination of the set of radicals to which the word belongs. Attempts by later grammarians, such as Ibn Ǧinnī (d. 392/1002) to assemble all permutations of a given set of radicals (e.g., *k-l-m*, *m-l-k*, *l-k-m*, etc.) and extract a common meaning stuck to the lexical level and did not aim at finding any 'reality' or 'truth' behind the words. When early commentators sometimes comment on foreign names in the *Qur'ān*, such as Jacob or Isaac, they have to borrow etymologies from the Jewish tradition and hardly ever undertake an attempt at etymologizing themselves.

We have already indicated above that in its most literal sense *maʿnā* means "the intention to say something" or "that which one intends to say". We assume that the term underwent an internal semantic development in Arabic, from a vague non-technical notion in the earliest efforts to explain the *Qur'ān*—'intention of the speaker'—towards a highly technical notion with

several applications in later linguistic theory. There is, therefore, no need to assume extraneous influence in Arabic linguistics for this aspect of linguistic theory, at least not for this particular term. Earlier efforts to regard *ma'nā* as a calque of the Greek *lektón* (Versteegh 1977:178–90) are thereby made redundant. This is not to say that there might not be foreign influence in the use of *ma'nā* in other disciplines than linguistics. In particular, the use of *ma'nā* in Mu'tazilite theology, where it indicates "the intrinsic causal determinant of accidents" (cf. below, p. 269, and see Frank 1967; but also his later remarks 1981:259, n. 1) might very well be connected with Greek (Stoic) theories.

In our discussion we shall more or less adhere to a chronological order of the development of the Arabic tradition, since this chronological order reflects the development of the ideas about semantics. In Section 2 we shall sketch the beginnings of the discipline, which are connected with the earliest efforts of exegesis of the *Qur'ān*, roughly during the first two centuries of the Hiğra (7th/8th centuries CE). Section 3 describes the emergence of technical grammar at the end of the 2nd/8th century with Sībawayhi's (d. 177/793?) *Kitāb* and the place of 'meaning' in his framework. Section 4 analyzes the role of semantics within the organization of Arabic grammar at large, in particular with regard to the notion of an underlying level in speech. In Section 5 the relationship between logic and grammar will be discussed, because the confrontation between Arab grammarians and Greek logical theories in the 3rd/4th (9th/10th) centuries triggered a fundamental debate between grammarians and logicians about the status of meaning and the relationship between speech and thought. Section 6 analyzes the integration of formal and semantic studies of speech in the so-called *'ilm al-'adab*, which emerged in the 5th/6th (11th/12th) centuries as a reaction to the traditional, basically formalistic analysis of language. In Section 7 the relationship between meaning and signification in the *'ilm 'uṣūl al-fiqh*, which was developed in the 4th-6th (10th-12th) centuries, is analyzed. Finally, we present our conclusions and provide suggestions for further reading.

2. From speaker to text: the exegetical tradition

The beginnings of scholarship in Islam are, not surprisingly, connected with the study of the *Qur'ān*. In the early Islamic community, after the death of the Prophet in 632 CE, understanding the revealed text was essential for the way the believers were to lead their lives. Since, as any revealed text, the

Qur'ān is not always open to immediate understanding, be it only because it was revealed in a Bedouin society no longer extant in the first centuries of Islam, professional help was needed to explain its meaning. The *Qur'ān* has been sent down, as God Himself informs the believers, in the language of the Bedouin, as a *qur'ānan 'arabiyyan* (*Qur'ān* 12/2) "an Arabic recitation". Just like human speech, God's speech aims at communication and consequently uses a medium that can be understood by the target group, the pre-Islamic Arabs. This means that the expression of God's message conforms to the laws of the Arabic language, including its idioms, idiosyncrasies, figures of speech. It also means that the language of the *Qur'ān* is in need of the same procedures of interpretation as human speech, since no utterance is ever wholly unambiguous and there never is a complete one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. The early believers, therefore, had to make an effort to interpret the language of the revealed text ("decoding" it, as Heinrichs [1984:129] puts it).

Until a few years ago, most studies on the exegetical activities in early Islam had to content themselves with the study of the later compilations, such as the *Tafsīr* by aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). These later compilations have preserved a large amount of quotations from the earlier generations of scholars, but there is no guarantee that they transmitted the exact words of these scholars *verbatim*, and the compilations are therefore not a reliable source for any conclusions about the terminology used by the early commentators. Fortunately, in the last few years several of the early commentaries have become available in printed editions, in particular the commentaries of Zayd ibn 'Alī (d. 120/737), Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), Muǧāhid ibn Ǧabr (d. 104/722) and Sufyān aṯ-Ṯawrī (d. 161/778), and we are now in a position to learn from them something about the state of exegetical studies in the second half of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century of the Hiǧra, roughly between 650 and 750 CE. It is obvious that from the point of view of the development of Islamic theology these documents are fascinating, but even from the narrower point of view of the linguist who wishes to reconstruct the development of grammatical studies in Islam, they are invaluable.

In the present context we are interested in the way the early commentaries deal with the meaning of the text of the *Qur'ān*. The efforts of the believers to understand the meaning of the message led to a rather simple hermeneutical model, in which the rules were mostly implicit. Explanation of the text is achieved by simple juxtaposition of the Qur'ānic phrase and its interpretation (its 'translation', or its 'explanatory rewriting', as Heinrichs [1984] puts

it) in terms that are easier to understand than the original. The meaning of the text is identified with the intention of the speaker, and the commentator's task is to elucidate this intention. In such a scholarly enterprise there is no need for a linguistic analysis of the language of the text as such.

The formula most frequently used to indicate the equivalence of text and explanation is:

A *yaʿnī* B "A; this [or: he] means B"

The verbal form *yaʿnī* derives from the same radicals as the term *maʿnā*, which itself is used only by some of the earliest commentaries. In most cases the subject of the verb *yaʿnī* is the speaker, i.e., "he intends to say", but in some passages the text is the subject, i.e., "it means". This latter usage may be regarded as an indication of a new tendency to take the text as the point of departure for the commentary, rather than the intention of the speaker. Other conventions are also found, for instance simple juxtaposition (AB) or the formulas:

A *'ay* B, A *yaqūlu* B "A, i.e. B", "A, he says B".

Explanations may concern single words, phrases or entire verses. An example of the explanation of a single word is:

> **al-'anāmil* yaʿnī 'aṭrāf al-'aṣābiʿ* "*'al-anāmil** this [or: he] means the tips of the fingers" (Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 298.9)

In examples such as this one the equivalence is between a Bedouin word, whose meaning has become obscure, and an everyday word that is easier to understand. The explanation of single words may also come in the form of a paraphrase as in the following example:

> **mufsidīna* yaqūlu lā taʿmalū fī l-'arḍ bi-l-maʿāṣī* "*corrupting* He [sc. God, the speaker in this verse] says: don't commit disobedience on earth" (Muqātil, *Tafsīr* I, 111.4)

In this example the word *mufsidīna* "corrupting, creating disorder" is lifted from the context of the verse and explained or paraphrased with an underlying prohibitive.

Even though most of the hermeneutical rules are implicit, the commentators show themselves to be aware of the relationship between text and intention of the speaker by their use of certain technical terms. In the introduction to his *Tafsīr* Muqātil gives a rather haphazard list of the text types contained in the *Qur'ān*, which covers topics in the text, qualities of the text and textual

types. Among the 'types' enumerated are: particular and general reference; historical accounts; laws and rules; parables; ambiguous and univocal speech. One type in particular is relevant for the relationship between the intention of the speaker and the actual text. In some cases the text does not state explicitly the whole content of the message: parts of it are left out so that the hearer has to supply them himself. This is called by Muqātil *'iḍmār*, literally "hiding, suppression", and within his relatively non-technical approach to exegesis this is one of the few technical terms to indicate explicitly the relationship between the text and its meaning. In the following examples the meaning of a verse is specified by an exegetical addition which Muqātil calls *'iḍmār*:

**allātī hāǧarna ma'aka* 'ilā l-madīna 'iḍmār* "*who emigrated with you* with suppression of: to Medina" (Muqātil, *Tafsīr* III, 501.2 on Q. 33/50)

**mā 'indakum* min al-'amwāl 'iḍmār* "*what there is with you* with suppression of: of fortunes" (Muqātil, *Tafsīr* II, 485.15 on Q. 16/96)

In these examples the considerations which lead the commentator to the supposition of an *'iḍmār* are semantic in nature and linked with the underlying intention. But the hermeneutic device of supplying a suppressed word may also serve as an explanation of the syntactic structure of a verse. Muqātil's commentary does not contain any examples of this use of suppression. But elsewhere we find quotations from the older commentators which indicate that the development towards a syntactic use must have started rather early. One such example is the following, which is attributed to the Qur'ānic reader 'Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā' (d. 154/770):

**yā ǧibālu 'awwibī ma'ahu wa-ṭ-ṭayra* 'alā 'iḍmār wa-saḫḫarnā ṭ-ṭayra* "*o mountains sing the praise with him and the birds [acc.]* with suppression of (and We employed) the birds" (al-Ǧumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt* I, 21.2)

In this example the accusative of *aṭ-ṭayra* "and the birds" is explained with a suppressed verb "We employed", which is supplied by the commentator in order to explain the surface structure of the verse. We shall see below that in classical linguistic theory suppression and deletion became standard terms in the syntactic analysis of sentences.

This early stage of 'linguistic' studies is characterized by a concentration on semantic considerations, but occasionally the hermeneutic procedures that had been introduced for this purpose could also be applied to syntactically opaque cases. The commentators did not make any distinction between the two levels of semantic and syntactic explanation, since there was as yet no fixed domain of linguistics. The general underlying thought in their exegetical

activities was, however, that the surface of speech is not identical with the intention of the speaker, in other words, that there is no one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. The form is taken by the commentators as given, since it belongs to the revealed text, and the commentators' task is to mediate between this given form and the 'reconstructed' intention of the speaker. It is evident that the discrepancy between form and meaning is not regarded by them as a mistake or an oversight on the part of the speaker. On the contrary, the text of the *Qur'ān* is the model of speech *par excellence*: God's language possesses the same superior properties and qualities of the language of the Bedouin, the *kalām al-ʿArab*, but to a superlative degree.

In 'Abū 'Ubayda's (d. 210/825) *Maǧāz al-Qur'ān* the difference between form and meaning in the Qur'ānic text has become the subject of a special treatment. This monograph in the form of a commentary deals with all discrepancies in the text, following the order of the verses. In his introduction 'Abū 'Ubayda gives a survey of all phenomena of this type occurring in the *Qur'ān*. Collectively they are called *maǧāz*, i.e., (following Heinrichs 1984:127) a departure from the original application of a word or category and the establishment of a new meaning. An individual occurrence of such a phenomenon is often introduced with the formula:

A *maǧāzuhu* B "A, its *maǧāz* is B"

or

maǧāz A *maǧāz* B "the *maǧāz* of A is the *maǧāz* of B"

As an example we may quote the following passage:

'am taqūlūna 'inna 'Ibrāhīma 'am fī mawḍiʿ 'alif al-istifhām wa-maǧāzuhā 'a-taqūlūna* "*or do you say that Abraham* *'am* is used here instead of the interrogative *'a*, and the explanation (*maǧāz*) of this verse is: *'a-taqūlūna*" ('Abū 'Ubayda, *Maǧāz* I, 59.4–5)

Sometimes 'Abū 'Ubayda uses a different formula:

A *maʿnāhu* B "A its meaning is B"

It appears that *maʿnā* and *maǧāz* are more or less synonymous. An example is the following passage from the introduction to the book; it deals with the verse Q. 16/98:

fa-'iḏā qara'ta l-qur'āna maǧāzuhu 'iḏā talawta baʿḍahu fī 'aṯar baʿḍ ḥattā yaǧtamiʿa wa-yanḍamma baʿḍuhu 'ilā baʿḍ, wa-maʿnāhu yasīru 'ilā maʿnā t-ta'līf wa-l-ǧamʿ* "*and if you read the *Qur'ān** its *maǧāz* is 'if you follow one part of it after another,

until its parts become united and put together, and its meaning (*ma'nā*) becomes the meaning of composition and collection'' ('Abū 'Ubayda, *Maǧāz* I, 3.2–3)

This explanation of the Qur'ānic expression *qara'ta* combines lexical explanation of the word and paraphrastic interpretation of the verse. When the commentator says ''its meaning becomes the meaning of ...'', he is referring to an autonomous semantic process that takes place in the text (or in the language), in which the speaker's intention no longer dominates. The commentator's attention has turned away from the speaker and become involved in the explanation of the text. The next step in the development of linguistic studies was that from the explanation of the text to the analysis of the structure of the language. This step was taken by a group of scholars in the city of Basra who became interested in the linguistic aspects of exegesis.

The appearance of professional grammarians on the scene did not mean the end of Qur'ānic exegesis proper. Throughout the history of Islam the text of the *Qur'ān* continued to be studied by commentators (*mufassirūn*) for its meaning. Elaborate hermeneutic schemes were applied by jurisconsults to the text in order to extract its legal implications. In circles of mystics the text was subjected to a different kind of interpretation based on the assumption that beneath the surface sense of the text (*ẓāhir*) there was a hidden meaning (*bāṭin*). This deeper insight could not be reached by ratiocination, but only by mystical vision. Common to all mystical interpretations of the *Qur'ān* was the claim that they were based on divine inspiration by which the hidden secrets of the text were revealed to the mystic. One of the most famous attempts in this genre was Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 638/1240) exegesis, which aims at the elucidation of the symbolic sense (*rūḥ*) of the Holy Book, which ''shimmered behind the veil of the verse'' (*lāḥa lī ḫalfa sifāra hāḏihi l-'āya*; Goldziher 1920:240, n. 1). The method used by him is called *ta'wīl* ''interpretation'' which is contrasted with the *tafsīr* of the outer sense.

There is a large difference between Ibn al-'Arabī's search for the hidden meaning of the text and that of the extreme mystics, called Bāṭiniyya, who went so far as to neglect the outer sense of the text completely and deny the necessity of abiding by the commands and prescriptions of the *Qur'ān*. Ibn al-'Arabī sharply condemns such a belief and states that the allegorical interpretation of the text does not abolish its literal meaning. Thus in the famous verse Q. 20/12, in which Moses is ordered to take off his two shoes on holy ground, the shoes are given various allegorical interpretations (they represent the *Qur'ān* and the *sunna*, or the outer and inner sense of the text).

But notwithstanding this allegorization Ibn al-ʿArabī emphasizes the fact that he also took off his physical shoes. Likewise, the ritual prescriptions of the *Qur'ān* are real obligations for the believers while at the same time representing a deeper truth about the spiritual development the initiated have to go through.

3. From text to language: Sībawayhi

In the preceding section we have seen that in the early exegetical tradition the scholars' main concern was to elucidate the meaning of the text of the *Qur'ān* by finding out the intention of the speaker, in this case God Himself. The exegetes were not interested in the structure of language, but only in the message that was conveyed by the text. When we compare their approach with that of the earliest grammarians, we find that a new orientation appeared in the course of a few decades. From the time of the appearance of the *Kitāb Sībawayhi* in Basra, at the end of the 2nd century of the Hiğra (8th century CE), linguists occupied themselves with the formal-syntactic aspect of language to the exclusion of other aspects, such as the lexical meaning of the words. The meaning of speech utterances in the sense of their purpose in discourse continued to be an important means to differentiate between different syntactic constructions, but the grammarians' main interest became the structural analysis of the language. How did this shift in scholarly orientation come about?

According to Talmon (1985, 1990) the activities of the grammarians in Basra gradually superseded those of the grammarians in Kufa, who continued an older tradition, called by him the Iraqi tradition. Basran grammar was canonized by later generations who traced it back to the legendary 'Abū l-'Aswad ad-Du'alī. A comparison between Kufan grammar and the exegetical activities of the first two centuries of Islam confirms the fact that the Kufan tradition was older than the Basran tradition and shows that the Kufans based their approach to the study of language on an elaboration of the primitive rules of the earlier exegetes. There was an undeniable association between Kufan grammatical methods and terminology and the exegesis of the *Qur'ān*. The connection between the two traditions is evident, for instance, in the *Maʿānī l-Qur'ān* by al-Farrā' (d. 207/822). This work was written in the same formal framework as the commentaries of the older exegetes, with the text of the *Qur'ān* as ordering principle, but al-Farrā' paid much more attention to the morphology and syntax of Arabic than his predecessors. In some

respects his approach as evidenced in the *Maʿānī l-Qur'ān* still reflects, however, the exegetical tradition from which they sprang, particularly with regard to the explanation of the meaning of the text. His use of *'iḍmār* "ellipsis", for instance, is similar to that of the exegetes.

In Basra, on the other hand, the exegetical tradition was regarded as slightly out of date, when compared to the new, innovative studies of Sībawayhi (d. 177/793?), whose *Kitāb* propagated a new approach to language. Sībawayhi did not aim at the explanation of the revealed text, but at a structural description or explanation of the Arabic language. The *Kitāb Sībawayhi* did not originate in a vacuum, however. Although some of his predecessors in Basra were still involved in the interpretation of the *Qur'ān*, their approach differed sharply from that of the older exegetes and the Kufan grammarians. Where the exegetes had attempted to interpret the text in a neutral way, i.e., without impugning the grammatical correctness of the language of the *Qur'ān*, which was regarded as sacrosanct, Sībawayhi's immediate predecessors went so far as to replace certain forms in the *Qur'ān* with others that in their eyes were more correct. An example is that of the famous phrase in Q. 20/63:

'inna hāḏāni la-sāḥirāni "Indeed, these two [nom.] are sorcerers"

For the commentators this verse presented a problem because of the construction of the particle *'inna* "indeed". According to the rules of the Classical language this particle is always followed by an accusative, but in this passage it is construed with a nominative. In the old commentaries the Qur'ānic phrase is simply paraphrased with the more standard construction, but some of Sībawayhi's predecessors, such as Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb (d. 182/798) and Ibn 'Abī 'Isḥāq (d. 117/735 or 127/744) explicitly corrected it and 'Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlā' even stated that it was a mistake made by a copyist in the text (al-Farrā', *Maʿānī* II, 183). They maintained that the form as it occurs in the text is unacceptable according to the laws of analogy (*qiyās*) they claimed to have discovered in the Arabic language.

In the *Kitāb* Sībawayhi made very clear that in this respect he did not share the opinion of his Basran predecessors: unlike them he did not use analogy (*qiyās*) as an instrument to measure the correctness of speech or even as a method for the production of new analogical forms. For Sībawayhi analogy was only an explanatory device with which the correctness of linguistic theories rather than linguistic forms could be gauged. For him the text of the *Qur'ān* as it had been codified under the fourth caliph ʿUṯmān, the so-called ʿUṯmānic codex, constituted the principal and authoritative source of lan-

guage and thus, the ultimate source of linguistic correctness. The sole purpose of grammatical analogy is to explain the structure of language on the basis of a given corpus of texts, which apart from the *Qur'ān* also included the pre-Islamic poems. It is probably not too far-fetched to assume that this attitude towards the codified text determined the course linguistics was to take from the times of Sībawayhi onwards. At the end of the 2nd century of the Hiğra the form of the text had ceased to be an issue in discussions among grammarians, and where conventional Qur'ānic readers continued to transmit the allowed vowel variants of the codified text, the grammarians now turned towards another aim: the explanation of the language.

The shift from exegetical to grammatical analysis, from textual to linguistic criticism, was accompanied by a shift in scope and orientation of grammatical studies. This shift is linked with Sībawayhi's name, whose *Kitāb* gradually superseded all rivalling traditions, such as the Kufan one. From now on the mainstream of Arabic linguistics was characterized by an emphasis on the formal-syntactic aspect of language and grammar. This is manifest, too, when we compare Basran with Kufan linguistic argumentation. For the most part, Sībawayhi includes only syntactic arguments in his explanation of linguistic phenomena, whereas al-Farrā' very often invokes semantic constraints in his linguistic argumentation (cf. Dévényi 1990a, b).

Sībawayhi's emphasis on syntactic reasoning in his explanation of linguistic phenomena does not mean that he is unaware of the role of meaning in speech. In one of the first chapters of the *Kitāb* he talks about the phenomenon of homonymy and synonymy:

> "Know that in their [sc. the Arabs'] speech there are different expressions for different meanings, and different expressions for an identical meaning, and an identical expression for different meanings ... Different expressions for different meanings are, e.g., *ğalasa* 'he sat down' and *ḏahaba* 'he went away'. Different expressions for an identical meaning are, e.g., *ḏahaba*, *inṭalaqa* 'he went away'. An identical expression for different meanings is, e.g., *wağadtu ʿalayhi* 'I fell in love with him' from *mawğida* 'passion', and *wağadtu* 'I found' if you mean *wiğdān* 'finding' of a stray animal. Examples of this are very frequent" (*iʿlam 'anna min kalāmihim iḫtilāf al-lafẓayn li-ḫtilāf al-maʿnayayn wa-ḫtilāf al-lafẓayn wa-l-maʿnā wāḥid wa-ttifāq al-lafẓayn wa-ḫtilāf al-maʿnayayn ... fa-ḫtilāf al-lafẓayn li-ḫtilāf al-maʿnayayn huwa naḥwa ğalasa wa-ḏahaba wa-ḫtilāf al-lafẓayn wa-l-maʿnā wāḥid naḥwa ḏahaba wa-nṭalaqa wa-ttifāq al-lafẓayn wa-l-maʿnā muḫtalif qawluka wağadtu ʿalayhi min al-mawğida wa-wağadtu 'iḏā 'aradta wiğdān aḍ-ḍālla wa-'ašbāh hāḏā kaṯīr*, Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* I, 7–8)

'Meaning' is here the semantic content of lexical items, traditionally the domain of the science of lexicography (*ʿilm al-luġa*). The passage just quoted

is, however, exceptional: in the rest of the *Kitāb* Sībawayhi does not deal with the relationship between words and their lexical meaning but dedicates himself solely to the study of the syntactic and morphological aspects of speech.

Nonetheless, the term *maʿnā* is one of the most frequent terms in the *Kitāb*. According to Troupeau's index (1976:150) it occurs 891 times (the plural *maʿānī* only 19 times). Since *maʿnā* does not denote the lexical meaning of words or sets of radicals, it must denote something else. Right at the beginning of the *Kitāb*, for instance, the term is used in the definition of the "particle" (*ḥarf*):

> "This is the chapter of what words are in Arabic. Words are noun, verb, and particle which comes for a meaning that is neither noun nor verb" (*hāḏā bāb mā al-kalim min al-ʿArabiyya, fa-l-kalim ism wa-fiʿl wa-ḥarf ǧāʾa li-maʿnan laysa bi-sm wa-lā fiʿl*, Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* I, 2.1)

The exact interpretation of this phrase is controversial. According to later generations of grammarians the enigmatic phrase "which comes for a meaning" means that particles are words whose function is to indicate meanings in other words, for instance the preposition *ʾilā* "towards", which indicates a direction towards something else. Probably, this was not what Sībawayhi meant. For him, particles are just as meaningful as nouns and verbs, only their meaning differs from that of the nouns and the verbs, or rather, if we follow Talmon's interpretation (forthcoming) the particles serve to indicate a linguistic meaning only, without a referent in the extra-linguistic world, as is the case for the nouns and the verbs. Whatever the correct interpretation of the definition, it is clear that *maʿnā* does not denote here the lexical meaning of a particle. For the later commentators it was obvious that the meaning of *maʿnā* in the definition of the particle was 'function of this grammatical category'. The commentator as-Sīrāfī (*Šarḥ* I, 60–61), for instance, enumerates the following *maʿānī* of the particles: coordination (e.g., *wa-* "and"); specification (e.g., the article *al-*); emphasis (e.g., *ʾinna* "indeed"); interrogation (e.g., *hal*, which introduces questions). His interpretation may well be right, since Sībawayhi very often uses *maʿnā* in this sense (cf. Carter 1968:211). He speaks, for instance, of the *maʿnā* of the accusative (*Kitāb* I, 48), the *maʿnā* of the imperative and the prohibitive (*Kitāb* I, 452), or the *maʿnā* of the exception (*Kitāb* I, 374).

The functional sense of *maʿnā* is, however, not the only one in the *Kitāb*. In some passages, *maʿnā* is clearly the intention of the speaker, as for instance in the chapter on abbreviated expressions in speech (*Kitāb* I, 108ff.). In this

chapter Sībawayhi distinguishes between the actual utterance (*fī l-lafẓ*) and its meaning (*fī l-maʿnā*). As an example from the *Qur'ān* he quotes the following verse (Q. 12/82):

is'ali l-qaryata "ask the village"

and then states that its meaning (*maʿnā*) is:

is'al 'ahla l-qaryati "ask the people of the village"

According to Carter (1968:211–12) the 'functional' concept of meaning is the only one in the *Kitāb*. According to him this concept is even present in expressions such as *maʿnā l-kalām* "meaning of speech" (*Kitāb* I, 420) or *maʿnā l-ḥadīṯ* "meaning of discourse" (*Kitāb* I, 50):

> "For a *kalam* only has one meaning, which is not the sum of the lexical meanings it may contain, but the single purpose for which it, as a single set of communication, was uttered. We have here a most valuable clue to Sibawaihi's functional view of language, which is confirmed time and again by the use of the listener as the point of reference by which the speech is judged"

In other words, according to him speech always serves a communicative function, and this is what Sībawayhi refers to with *maʿnā*. 'Functional' in this interpretation is equivalent to 'communicative'. But 'functional' as we have used it above implies something else, namely the functions of syntactic and/or morphological categories, which are called its *maʿānī*. We agree with Carter that both in the expressions in which the *maʿnā* of speech is invoked, and in the passages in which a distinction is set up between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, Sībawayhi is talking about the underlying sense, the 'purpose', as Carter calls it, for which speech is used. In this sense, *maʿnā* is more or less identical with the intention of the speaker. But in combination with syntactic and morphological categories it seems to us that a different kind of function is involved, having more to do with the function of an element within the structure of the language.

In conclusion we may say that Sībawayhi at least once explicitly mentions the role of *maʿnā* as the semantic correlate (the lexical meaning) of words and sets of radicals, and that in some passages he refers to the purpose of speech as a medium to communicate the intention of the speaker to the listener. But in the majority of instances in the *Kitāb maʿnā* denotes the syntactic function of a word or category. This was to become the predominant role of *maʿnā* in the standard version of linguistic theory in the period after Sībawayhi. This standard version was developed by the Basran successors of Sībawayhi, who built on his ideas in the *Kitāb*. In the following section

we shall analyze the role of meaning and the semantic component within this Basran formal(istic) theory of grammar.

4. The role of semantics in Arabic linguistic theory

We have seen above that from the earliest times of Islam onwards—as is probably the case in every linguistic tradition—scholars were acutely aware that there is no one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning. In the context of the exegesis of the *Qur'ān* 'meaning' is identical with the intention of the speaker, who has a tendency not to articulate and communicate completely his 'hidden thoughts', his intention. In one of the commentators we came across the term *'iḍmār* "hiding", which indicates this tendency on the part of the speaker. As a result of the *'iḍmār* the surface utterances do not correspond completely with the intended message. The commentator 'undoes' the effect of the process of hiding by adding, deleting, or changing words in the surface utterance, so that the intended meaning is revealed.

In linguistic theory the same phenomenon of *'iḍmār* is invoked by the grammarians, but with one fundamental difference. In grammar, at least in the standard version as elaborated by the Basran grammarians, the aim of the reconstruction of the underlying message is the explanation of the surface structure of speech, in those cases where the relationship between message and structure has become disturbed. Specifically, the underlying reconstruction is needed in order to explain those cases in which the declensional endings of the surface sentence do not conform to the normal rules of grammar, or cannot be explained with the help of those rules. In Kufan grammar the term continues to be used in the sense of the old commentaries; in al-Farrā''s *Maʿānī l-Qur'ān*, for instance, it often denotes the suppression of a certain element in the text, when the meaning is clear, without any connection with the government relations in the sentence (cf. Dévényi 1990b:104; Kinberg 1996:426–29). In Basran grammar *'iḍmār* received two specialized meanings, that of 'anaphora' and that of a hypothetical constituent that is restored by the grammarian on an underlying level in order to explain the governance relations on the surface level.

In the system of the Basran grammarians the counterpart of the speaker's suppression of elements in the surface sentence is the grammarian's *taqdīr*, his reconstruction of the underlying sentence. In the *Kitāb Sībawayhi* the term *taqdīr* is not yet used in the sense of 'underlying level', but in later grammar it became the standard term. Originally, *taqdīr* must have meant something

like 'determining the status of a linguistic element', 'giving a structural description of an element' (cf. Versteegh 1994) but gradually it came to mean the reconstruction of the underlying level. In this sense it replaced the term Sībawayhi uses for the grammatical reconstruction of the underlying level, *tamṯīl* "exemplification, comparison". According to Ayoub (1990) the operation of *tamṯīl* establishes a relation between the actual utterance and an imaginary utterance (*ka'anna* "as if"). In the sentence *mā 'aḥsana ʿabdallāhi* "how beautiful 'Abdallāh is!", for instance, the accusative of *ʿabdallāhi* is explained by a *tamṯīl* in which this word is the object of a verb: *šay'un 'aḥsana ʿabdallāhi* "a thing that made 'Abdallāh beautiful" (*Kitāb* I, 37). Sībawayhi adds that this is just a *tamṯīl*: the sentence is never actually uttered in this way.

The positing of an underlying level has to do with the structural description of the sentence, and the main motive of the grammarians is the explanation of the government structure of the surface sentence. Ibn as-Sarrāǧ (d. 316/928), for instance, compares two reading variants of Q. 8/85:

> *mā lakum min 'ilāhin ġayruhu/mā lakum min 'ilāhin ġayrihi* "there is no God for you apart from Him" (Ibn as-Sarrāǧ, *'Uṣūl* I, 94; cf. Frank 1981:312)

The difference between the two variants centers on the case-ending of *ġayruhu/ġayrihi* "apart from Him". Ibn as-Sarrāǧ concludes that the former reading "follows the meaning (*maʿnā*)", whereas the latter "follows the expression (*lafẓ*)". It is obvious that 'following the meaning' in this connection has nothing to do with the semantic structure of the sentence, nor with the intention of the speaker but must be interpreted here in the sense that the meaning of the sentence is an underlying representation which has the form

> **mā lakum 'ilāhun ġayruhu*

The nominative variant of *ġayruhu* thus follows the underlying nominative of *'ilāhun*, whereas the genitive variant *ġayrihi* follows the case-ending of the surface form *min 'ilāhin*. When used in this context *maʿnā* is identical with the underlying level. No doubt, the original use of *maʿnā* as the reconstructed or paraphrased intention of a Qur'ānic verse is responsible for this use in grammar. If there is a difference with *taqdīr*, it is one of perspective: *taqdīr* is the process by which the grammarian reconstructs the underlying level, *maʿnā* is the result of the reconstruction.

The central concern of all Arabic grammarians was the formal explanation of all case-endings in terms of their 'governors' (*ʿawāmil*). In the sentence

zaydan ḍarabtu
Zayd [acc.] I-hit

the accusative of the object can only be explained by positing an underlying level on which the governing verb precedes the object, thus:

ḍarabtu zaydan
I-hit Zayd [acc.]

According to the linguistic theory followed by the grammarians a governor always has to precede the word that is governed by it and it can govern only one object. Thus, in the sentence:

zaydan ḍarabtuhu
Zayd [acc.] I-hit-him

in which the verb governs an accusative pronominal suffix (*-hu*), we must posit an underlying level

**ḍarabtu zaydan ḍarabtuhu*
I-hit Zayd [acc.] I-hit-him

On this underlying level the inserted first verb acts as the governor of *zaydan* and thus explains its accusative ending. These examples show that the purpose of the underlying sentence cannot be the explanation of the meaning in terms of the intention of the speaker, since it is perfectly clear what the surface sentence means. When Owens (1988:198) concludes that the basic motivation for setting up an underlying level was "the desire to maintain an overall structural coherency in the grammar and to derive the correct meaning", he is only partially right. It is correct to say that one of the functions of the *taqdīr* was to achieve harmony in the description of sentence structure (cf. Baalbaki 1979:7–8), but its essential purpose is the explanation of the surface structure.

How, then, do we account for the fact that in Arabic grammar the expression *fī t-taqdīr* "on the underlying level" is practically synonymous with *fī l-maʿnā* "in the meaning"? As we have seen above in the quotation from Ibn as-Sarrāǧ, the reconstructed underlying sentence was sometimes called the *maʿnā* of the actual utterance. Since the function of *taqdīr* cannot be the reconstruction of the intention of the speaker, it may seem strange that the grammarians use *maʿnā* in this context. Actually, there is a certain connection between the reconstructed underlying level, which serves as an explanation of the surface structure, on the one hand, and the intention of the speaker,

on the other. The underlying form is a complete sentence, albeit a hypothetical, reconstructed one and as such it belongs to the utterance. But at the same time it is often closer to the intended meaning than the surface sentence.

We assume that this confusion is a natural result of the development of grammatical studies from exegetical activities: just like the exegete uncovers the real meaning of the text (i.e., the intention of the speaker), the grammarian reconstructs the real meaning (i.e., the underlying structure) of language. If this assumption is correct, the *taqdīr* in this sense is associated by the grammarians intuitively with the intention of the speaker, although in reality it represents a totally different concept, namely an accurate representation of the relations in the surface sentence. As a matter of fact, Ibn Ǧinnī (*Ḫaṣā'iṣ* I, 283–84; cf. Kouloughli 1983:54–55) explicitly warns his readers that if the reconstruction of the underlying level (*taqdīr al-'i'rāb*) differs from the explanation of the meaning (*tafsīr al-ma'nā*) the reconstruction should be corrected accordingly.

In spite of its use in connection with the discussions about *taqdīr*, the standard meaning of *ma'nā* in linguistic theory is different. In the context of morpho-syntactic analyses it indicates the semantic correlate of a morpho-syntactic category, which is independent from the speaker. Or, in Kouloughli's terms (1983:53) "la grammaire a clairement pour objet le *lafẓ*, c'est-à-dire la matérialisation linguistique du *ma'nā*". Bohas (Bohas & Guillaume 1984:23–56) provides a thorough analysis of this linguistic use of *ma'nā*. The main thrust of his argument is that two kinds of *ma'nā* should be distinguished, called by him MA'NĀ I and MA'NĀ II. The MA'NĀ I is the semantic content of all the words that are derived from the same set of radicals, for instance the notion of 'hitting' that is connected with the radicals *ḍ-r-b*. This is what Bohas (Bohas & Guillaume 1984:27) calls "la charge sémantique commune à tous les mots dérivés d'une même racine". It is the concept of 'meaning' as it is used by the lexicographers, which is of no concern to the grammarians.

The MA'NĀ II, on the other hand, is the meaning or function of the morphological pattern that is applied to these radicals, for instance the function of 'instrument' that is connected with the pattern *mif'āl*, e.g., *miftāḥ* "key" from the radicals *f-t-ḥ* "to open". In this example the pattern is part of derivational morphology, but inflectional categories, too, have a MA'NĀ II, e.g., the meaning of the imperfect verb of the pattern *yaf'a/i/ulu*, the meaning of the accusative, or the meaning of transitivity. Although Bohas does not deal with this explicitly, syntactic categories, such as the main constituents

of the sentence, may also be said to have a MAʿNĀ II, e.g., the meaning of the topic (*mubtada'*) or the agent (*fāʿil*). In the latter case, the meaning of *maʿnā* comes very close to our '(syntactic) function' or 'construction', sometimes expressed in Arabic grammar with the term *mawḍiʿ* "position".

As an example of the morpho-syntactic *maʿānī* we may quote a passage from az-Zağğāğī (d. 340/951) on the function of declension in speech:

> "Meanings alternate on the nouns, since they can be agent and object and possessor and possessed, and since there is no indication of these meanings in their form and their structure, but they are alike [in all these functions], the vowels of the declension are used to denote these meanings" (*'inna l-'asmā' lammā kānat taʿtawiruhā l-maʿānī fa-takūnu fāʿila wa-mafʿūla wa-muḍāfa wa-muḍāf 'ilayhā wa-lam takun fī ṣuwarihā wa-'abniyatihā 'adilla ʿalā hāḏihi l-maʿānī bal kānat muštarika, ğuʿilat ḥarakāt al-'iʿrāb fīhā tunabbi'u ʿan hāḏihi l-maʿānī*, az-Zağğāğī, *'Īḍāḥ* 69.6–8)

The *maʿānī* mentioned in this passage are the functions nouns can fulfil in a sentence—their syntactic roles—and although in the end it is the speaker who pronounces the vowels of the declension and is responsible for their use, this action of the speaker cannot influence the correlation between form and function in any way. Their use is dependent on the laws of the language, not the other way round.

The link between semantic function and syntactic role becomes clear when we compare the declensional endings of the noun and the verb. According to the theory of the Arabic grammarians verbs are undeclinable, but because of an alleged resemblance to nouns imperfect verbs secondarily obtain a right to declensional endings, as in *yaḍrib-u*, *yaḍrib-a*, which in Western grammar are called the verbal moods of indicative and subjunctive, but in Arabic grammar the nominative (*rafʿ*) and accusative (*naṣb*) of the verb. The difference between the endings of the noun and those of the verb is that the former indicate syntactic functions such as 'being agent' or 'being object', whereas the latter are the result of a governor's action, but do not signal any syntactic function: the accusative (subjunctive) of the verb is used after the conjunction *'an*, but has no functional role in the sentence. This is stated explicitly by az-Zamaḫšarī (d. 538/1144): "these declensional endings are not signs of any meanings as the declensional endings of the noun are" (*laysat hāḏihi l-wuğūh bi-'aʿlām ʿalā maʿānin ka-wuğūh 'iʿrāb al-ism*, *Mufaṣṣal* 109.8f.; Ermers 1995:117).

We note here that the distinction of two different *maʿnā*s by Bohas is a distinction set up by a modern historiographer. Within the Arabic tradition the two senses of the term *maʿnā* are used indiscriminately, and *maʿnā* denotes at the same time the lexical and the morphological/syntactic meaning. In a

grammatical treatise there could hardly arise any confusion since the lexical meaning (the MAʿNĀ I) is normally excluded from linguistics (*ʿilm an-naḥw*) proper. Only in lexicography (*ʿilm al-luġa*), which had grown directly and separately out of the exegetical tradition, the old method of paraphrasing the meaning of words in terms of the set of radicals which constituted them, was continued.

In the science of grammar, as it was developed by Sībawayhi, there was no room for the lexical analysis of meaning. Grammarians occupied themselves with the MAʿNĀ II exclusively, and even in their own domain they did not spend too many words on the semantic content of the categories involved, since they were mainly interested in their form (*lafẓ*). The 'meaning' of feminine words, for instance, is 'femininity' (*ta'nīṯ*), and that is about all that can be said about this category. Likewise, the 'meaning' of the agent is 'agentivity' (*fāʿiliyya*), and no further analysis of this notion is deemed necessary, at least not in the standard grammatical treatises before the 4th-5th/10th-11th centuries. Presumably, the grammarians believed that there was some link between the categorial meaning and the extra-linguistic world, for instance when they say that a word like *'umm*, which lacks a feminine ending, is feminine 'in meaning', but masculine 'in form'. We shall see below that in al-Ǧurǧānī's approach to linguistics it is precisely the semantic content of morpho-syntactic categories that is subjected to a more thorough analysis.

Two special usages of the term *maʿnā* should be mentioned here. In the first place, *maʿnā* is used in the expression *maʿānī l-kalām* "the meanings of speech" to denote sentence types: interrogative, declarative, optative, etc. (cf. Buburuzan 1995). In Greco-Latin grammar these speech types are called *eídē lógou* and some of them are connected with verbal moods. They may be compared to what in modern pragmatics are called 'speech acts' (Frank 1981:269–71). The typical list in grammatical literature contains the following five *maʿānī*: judgment about truth or falseness, command, question, request, invocation, but there are lists with more categories. Since the *maʿānī l-kalām* have to do with the way the speaker models his message (roughly the modern notion of 'speech act' or 'sentence type, mood', cf. Levelt 1989:63ff.), there is a certain connection with the general use of *maʿnā* as the intention of the speaker, or the content of the message. The connection with the linguistic use of *maʿnā* in grammatical treatises is loose, however, and the *maʿānī l-kalām* will therefore not be of any direct concern to us in this section. There is at any rate no direct connection with the expression *maʿnā l-kalām* in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, which indicates the general purpose of an utterance.

The second usage is that of *maʿnā* in the combination *ism maʿnā* "abstract noun". In later Arabic grammar nouns are divided into *ism ʿayn* "concrete noun" and *ism maʿnā* "abstract noun". Ibn Ǧinnī, for instance, states:

> "... that the verbal nouns are generic expressions for abstract notions, just as there are other words which are generic expressions for concrete notions, such as *rağul* 'man', *faras* 'horse', *ġulām* 'slave', *dār* 'house', *bustān* 'garden'" (... *'anna l-maṣādir 'ağnās li-l-maʿānī kamā ġayruhā 'ağnās li-l-'aʿyān naḥwa rağul wa-faras wa-ġulām wa-dār wa-bustān*, Ibn Ǧinnī, *Ḫaṣā'iṣ* II, 206.8–10)

In this quotation the term *maʿānī* obviously cannot be interpreted as 'meanings' or 'semantic components', but it indicates an abstract notion, such as the action indicated by the radicals of the verb. It is hard to imagine how such a special use of *maʿnā* could have arisen through internal development in Arabic grammar, and it is very likely that in this case there was a Greek source. In Greek (Stoic) grammar the term *prãgma* was used as the opposite of *sẽma* to indicate abstract notions, and there is some evidence that this term is the origin of this special use of *maʿnā* (cf. Versteegh 1977:186 and below, p. 270).

According to Ibn Ǧinnī, the verbal noun (called in Arabic *maṣdar*) serves as an expression for abstract notions. The quotation above comes from a chapter in which Ibn Ǧinnī gives examples of "proper names that are applied to *maʿānī* rather than *'aʿyān*" (*bāb fī taʿlīq al-'aʿlām ʿalā l-maʿānī dūna l-'aʿyān*). At first sight, this seems to be a strange proposition, but its purpose becomes clear when we realize that the term *ʿayn*, which normally means "person" is used here for "concrete notion" (cf. Greek *sõma*). The author compares the relationship between the verbal noun and the *maʿnā* with that between a common noun and a concrete referent. In both cases he calls the expression a "proper name" (*ʿalam*). Another example of a proper name is that of the numerals, when they are used for abstract counting, e.g., *aṯ-ṯalāṯa niṣf sitta* "three is the half of six". In that case, the noun serves as a proper name (*ʿalam*) for the number (*fa-ṣāra hāḏā l-lafẓ ʿalaman li-hāḏā l-maʿnā*, *Ḫaṣā'iṣ* II, 198.12). The notion of 'proper name' is also applied to technical terms for patterns in grammar. The grammarians say, for instance, that the pattern *'afʿalu* is used for adjectives of colour. In that case, the term *'afʿalu* is used as the proper name for a *maʿnā*, i.e., an abstract notion.

In this section we have surveyed two general tendencies in the use of *maʿnā* in linguistic theory, on the one hand as the underlying structure, and on the other as the function of a grammatical category, as well as two special uses (meaning as mood of the sentence, and meaning as abstract notion). This

analysis applies to the development of grammatical studies during roughly the first three or four centuries of the Hiğra. The confrontation with other disciplines such as logic and rhetoric led to the adoption of further uses, which will be sketched in the next Sections.

5. The relationship between logic and grammar

In the preceding sections we have found two uses of the term *maʿnā*: it was either connected with the speaker or with the language itself. In the latter case meaning was seen as something dependent on language, as a linguistic entity, just like the form (*lafẓ*). But if we take the intention of the speaker as our point of departure, it is also possible to look upon meaning as something linked with the concepts that are the correlates of objects in the extra-linguistic world. When *maʿnā* is used in this sense, it resembles the 'pre-verbal message' in modern speech production theory (cf. Levelt 1989:72ff.).

Such a use of the term is current in Arabic literary theory, where one of the hottest issues was the question of the priority of *lafẓ* or *maʿnā*. In these discussions the dichotomy finds a special interpretation: *lafẓ* is the linguistic expression of a non-linguistic *maʿnā*. Obviously, when *maʿnā* denotes the intention of the speaker, one may regard this intention as a 'pre-verbal message' providing the rough material for the verbal formulation or, with a vaguer term, as the 'ideas' of the speaker. By contrast, when Arabic linguists and exegetes use the term *maʿnā* for the intention of the speaker, they look upon this intention as something verbal in nature: the intention is what one wishes actually to say, not what one is thinking. The difference in approach is reflected by the course the discussions of the literary critics take. The famous literary critic and intellectual al-Ğāḥiẓ (d. 255/868), for instance, states that the *maʿnā* of a literary work is the thought expressed by the poet. This *maʿnā*, he says, is known universally and identical for all nations, which is why the real achievement of the poet lies in the *lafẓ* of the poem, in the way the poet expresses his thought and formulates it:

> "The meanings lie in the street, and non-Arabs and Arabs, Bedouin and city-dwellers alike know them; the real problem is setting up the right metre and choosing the words" (*wa-l-maʿānī matrūḥatun fī ṭ-ṭarīq yaʿrifuhā l-ʿağamī wa-l-ʿarabī wa-l-badawī wa-l-qarawī wa-'innamā š-ša'n fī 'iqāmat al-wazn wa-taḫayyur al-lafẓ*, al-Ğāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān* III, 131–32; cf. Heinrichs 1969:70)

Some literary critics followed al-Ğāḥiẓ in asserting the priority of the form or the expression in the evaluation of literary works, whereas others main-

tained that the real value of a literary work lies in the quality of its meanings or ideas (*istiḥsān al-maʿānī*). The details of the debate are perhaps less relevant here, but the important point is that the ideas expressed by the poet are not linguistic in nature. The matter at issue is precisely that there are two distinct domains, that of language and that of literary creation or thought.

In the introduction to his book on poets and poetry Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) sets up a classification in terms of this dichotomy (*Šiʿr* 6–8), in which he distinguishes four kinds of poetry:

a. "with a beautiful expression and an excellent meaning" (*ḥasuna lafẓuhu wa-ǧāda maʿnāhu*)
b. "with a beautiful and agreeable expression, but if you investigate it, you don't find any profit in its meaning" (*ḥasuna lafẓuhu wa-ḥalā fa-'iḏā fattaštahu lam taǧid hunāka fā'ida fī l-maʿnā*)
c. "with an excellent meaning, but its expressions fall short of it" (*ǧāda maʿnāhu wa-qaṣurat 'alfāẓuhu ʿanhu*)
d. "with a meaning that lags behind, and an expression that lags behind" (*ta'aḫḫara maʿnāhu wa-ta'aḫḫara lafẓuhu*)

In this classification the relationship between the meaning and its expression is not that between 'signifié' and 'signifiant': the function of the expression is to express the meanings, but they belong to different domains. The poetic meanings are connected with the intention of the poet, whereas the expressions are linguistic units with their own conventional, linguistic meaning, which may or may not be appropriate for the intention of the poet (cf. Kouloughli 1983:49–50). Inasmuch as the *maʿānī* of the poets can be said to be conventional, one may regard them as the motifs or themes of the poems (cf. the varying translations of *maʿnā* given by van Gelder [1982:37] "theme", [45] "meaning", [72] "motif", [76] "thought").

In this connection it is significant that al-Ǧāḥiẓ points out that the *maʿānī* are universal. According to him, the *maʿānī* are identical for all nations, but the *'alfāẓ* are different. This proves that the real difficulty lies in the selection of the appropriate *'alfāẓ*. It is not known whether there was any connection between the literary debate and the debate between the logicians and the grammarians that we shall discuss below, but no doubt the universality of meanings upheld by scholars like al-Ǧāḥiẓ made people aware of the dichotomy *lafẓ/maʿnā* and paved the way for a new approach to the speech/thought debate.

In the 3rd-4th/9th-10th centuries the Greek sciences became known in the

Arabo-Islamic world through the translations of Greek logical and philosophical works. Many of the scholars who worked in this field were affiliated with the famous translators' academy, the *Bayt al-ḥikma* "House of wisdom" that had been founded by the Caliph al-Ma'mūn in 215/830. The earliest translators were not Arabic-speaking Muslims, but Syriac-speaking Christians, such as Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq (d. 260/873 or 263/876) and his son 'Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn (d. 289/910). Some people became so enthusiastic about the possibilities of Greek logical thinking that they borrowed it wholesale and attempted to reform the entire scholarly tradition on the basis of their newly acquired expertise.

Just like scholars working in other disciplines, grammarians became attracted to this new fashion and some of them introduced the new concepts and definitions in their grammatical writings. Even those who opposed this trend could not escape entirely the influence of Greek logic in the organization and presentation of their grammatical treatises. The reflection of this new movement in grammar may be seen, for instance, in the 4th/10th century grammarian az-Zağğāğī (d. 340/951). Talking about the definition of the noun in grammar he quotes the Aristotelian definition, but then adds:

> "This does not belong to the terminology of the grammarians, nor to their objectives, since it is borrowed from the speech of the logicians, although some grammarians took it over. According to the objectives of the logicians and their school it is correct, however, because their aim is not the same as ours" (*wa-laysa hāḏā min 'alfāẓ an-naḥwiyyīn wa-lā 'awḍā'ihim wa-'innamā huwa min kalām al-manṭiqiyyīn wa-'in kāna qad ta'allaqa bihi ğamā'a min an-naḥwiyyīn wa-huwa ṣaḥīḥ 'alā 'awḍā' al-manṭiqiyyīn wa-maḏhabihim li-'anna ġaraḍahum ġayr ġaraḍinā*, az-Zağğāğī, *'Īḍāḥ* 48.11–14)

Az-Zağğāğī was clearly conversant with the new terminology, but as a grammarian he chose to distinguish between the two disciplines. Those grammarians who did not make a similar proviso were accused by some of their fellow-grammarians of mixing the two disciplines of logic and grammar, as happened, for instance, to ar-Rummānī (d. 384/994), who was also accused of being a Mu'tazilī (cf. Carter 1984).

But even those grammarians who fell for the new fashion, did not completely step out of their own discipline, and on the whole their grammatical writings are surprisingly conventional in set-up and doctrine. The professional logicians, however, took up a much more extreme position. They were not content with the introduction of notions and definitions but claimed for themselves a privileged status vis-à-vis the grammarians. In 320/932 a famous debate took place between a representative of the 'new school' of the logicians, Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940), and a representative of the old-fashioned

grammarians, the famous commentator of the *Kitāb Sībawayhi*, as-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979). This debate gives us a unique insight into the discussion about the relationship between logic and grammar, which in this debate was epitomized by the dichotomy form/meaning. Basing themselves on the topos of the universality of the *maʿānī*, which had become commonplace in the debates between literary critics, the logicians claimed that it was their responsibility to study the *maʿānī*, since these were the same for all nations and languages. The grammarians, on the other hand, should be content with the study of the expression of these *maʿānī* in the *'alfāẓ* of a particular language.

The opposition between the two parties is expressed very well in the following quotations from the text of the debate. Mattā ibn Yūnus says:

> "This is grammar and I haven't studied it because the logician does not need grammar, but the grammarian needs logic very much. Logic analyzes the meaning, and grammar analyzes the expression. If the logician is confronted with the expression, this is accidental, and if the grammarian stumbles onto the meaning, this, too, is accidental. The meaning is more elevated than the expression, and the expression is humbler than the meaning" (*hāḏā naḥw wa-n-naḥw lam 'anẓur fīhi li-'annahu lā ḥāǧata bi-l-manṭiqī 'ilayhi wa-bi-n-naḥwī ḥāǧatun šadīdatun 'ilā l-manṭiq li-'anna l-manṭiq yabḥaṯu ʿan al-maʿnā wa-n-naḥw yabḥaṯu ʿan al-lafẓ fa-'in marra l-manṭiqī bi-l-lafẓ fa-bi-l-ʿaraḍ wa-'in ʿaṯara n-naḥwī bi-l-maʿnā fa-bi-l-ʿaraḍ wa-l-maʿnā 'ašraf min al-lafẓ wa-l-lafẓ 'awḍaʿ min al-maʿnā*, at-Tawḥīdī, *'Imtāʿ* I, 114.6–9).

To this the grammarian retorts:

> "Logic is grammar, but abstracted from the Arabic language, and grammar is logic, but expressed in the language. The only difference between form and meaning is that the form is physical and the meaning rational [i.e., non-physical]" (*wa-n-naḥw manṭiq wa-lākinnahu maslūḫ min al-ʿarabiyya wa-l-manṭiq naḥw wa-lākinnahu mafhūm bi-l-luġa wa-'innamā l-ḫilāf bayna l-lafẓ wa-l-maʿnā 'anna l-lafẓ ṭabīʿī wa-l-maʿnā ʿaqlī*, at-Tawḥīdī, *'Imtāʿ* I, 115.1–3)

The difference between the two approaches is clear, and so is the difference in attitude towards the *maʿānī*. For the logician meaning is something connected with the universal laws of thinking and with universal concepts. These constitute the domain of the logician, who does not care how these meanings are expressed in an individual language. Mattā claims for logic a monopoly in the study of the meanings, leaving the study of the particular expressions to the grammarians of each language. The grammarian, on the other hand, rejects the validity of this claim. For him the meaning is always closely connected with the expression, and this is why he states that "grammar is logic": grammarians have to deal constantly with the meanings of their language, and in that respect grammar is actually logic. The confusion is

reinforced by the ambiguity of the Arabic equivalent of the Greek *lógos*, *manṭiq*, which as a technical term means "logic", but is derived from the radicals *n-ṭ-q* "to speak". So, when the grammarian says that grammar is logic, he actually claims that speech consists of more than just expressions but includes the meanings as well.

The opposition between the two adversaries reaches a climax when as-Sīrāfī starts to attack Mattā with regard to his competence in Arabic (as a Syrian Christian Mattā has learnt Arabic as a second language and is clearly not as fluent as the highly polished as-Sīrāfī, who is a real Arabic *'adīb* "intellectual, gentleman"). He asks him a number of questions about the meanings of Arabic expressions, for instance about the meanings of the coordinating particle *wa-*, i.e., about the different functions this particle has in Arabic. Mattā fails to answer, because this is not his field at all. The question is significant, since we can see here that for as-Sīrāfī *maʿānī* are the meanings of grammatical categories—the MAʿNĀ II of Bohas & Guillaume (1984)—whereas for Mattā they are the conceptual significates or correlates of the expressions. It is small wonder, therefore, that the two opponents do not come to any understanding at all. Needless to say, the public, consisting of the vizier and his court, are on the side of the grammarian, who in their view is defending the honour of the Arabic language against the unfounded claims of foreigners, who base themselves on a foreign language—Greek—but nevertheless dare to make statements about Arabic.

The debate between Mattā and as-Sīrāfī has been preserved for us in a highly biased version by an admirer of as-Sīrāfī's, and the arguments of the logician are no doubt reproduced in the most negative way. From the part of the logicians we have an independent treatise on the same topic of the difference between logic and grammar, by the Christian logician Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (d. 363/974). Yaḥyā distinguishes between "Arabic grammar" (*naḥw ʿarabī*) and "philosophical logic" (*manṭiq falsafī*), thereby restricting the domain of each grammatical discipline to one particular language. The treatise takes the same position as Mattā did in the debate with as-Sīrāfī, but Yaḥyā clarifies the issue by discussing the exact status of the *maʿānī* and by pointing out the difference between the *maʿānī* in logical/philosophical terminology and the *maʿānī* that are dealt with by the grammarians:

> "Don't be misled by the fact that with the expressions the grammarians aim at the meanings and that they assign the *a*, the *u*, the *i*, or any other vowel or consonant according to the meanings which they signify ... This is a fallacy that might tempt you into believing that the aim of their discipline is the signifying of meanings, and this in its turn might lead you to assume that the purpose of the discipline of grammar are the

meanings" (*fa-lā yuġalliṭannaka qaṣd an-naḥwiyyīn bi-l-'alfāẓ 'alā l-ma'ānī wa-'īǧābuhum fatḥan aw ḍamman aw kasran aw ġayr ḏālika min ḥarakātihā aw sukūnihā min qibali l-ma'ānī llatī tadullu 'alayhā . . . wa-hāḏā fahm mušabbah mūhim 'anna qaṣd ṣinā'atihim ad-dalāla 'alā l-ma'ānī fa-yaḥmiluka ḏālika 'alā 'an ta'taqida 'anna ġaraḍ ṣinā'at an-naḥw huwa l-ma'ānī*, Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, *Maqāla* 188.2–6)

Yaḥyā then explains why the *ma'ānī* about which the grammarians talk cannot be the subject of their grammatical studies. In the division of tasks between the two disciplines of grammar and logic the grammarian's responsibility is to provide the correct declensional endings according to the linguistic habits of the Arabs, whereas the logician takes care of the compatibility of expression (*lafẓ*) and meaning (*ma'nā*), which in logical terminology are called *dāll* "signifying" and *madlūl* "signified", respectively. The proof of the separability of expression and meaning is that even when you say something without declensional endings or with the wrong endings, everybody will understand its meaning. On the other hand, if you use a homonym in a sentence, even with the correct declensional endings nobody will understand which meaning you intend to express (*maqṣūd*). This is why the logician is only interested in expressions which indicate a meaning, and only insofar as this meaning has a universal validity. One might be tempted to equate *dāll* and *madlūl* with the Saussurean dichotomy of 'signifiant' and 'signifié'. But such an equation would be wrong: the *madlūl* or the *ma'nā* is a thought concept, or perhaps the intended meaning of the speaker, but certainly not the linguistic meaning of a linguistic sign.

From the *ma'ānī* as universal concepts in the theories of the logicians it is only one step to the *ma'ānī* as abstract entities with an existence of their own. In the system of the 'Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafā', a group of writers in the 4th/10th century who wrote an encyclopaedia of science this step is taken. Their 'meanings' are the non-physical, non-perceptible correlates of the physical sounds, which are transmitted by the speaker and extracted by the hearer from the sounds. At first their description of the *ma'ānī* looks like an ordinary analysis of the speech process:

"If [the air] goes out in the form of articulated and combined sounds, its meaning is recognized and its message is known; if it goes out without those sounds it is not understood" (*fa-'in ḫaraǧa 'alā ḥurūf muqaṭṭa'a mu'allafa, 'urifa ma'nāhu wa-'ulima ḫabaruhu; wa-'in ḫaraǧa 'alā ġayr ḥurūf lam yufham, Rasā'il* III, 114).

Elsewhere (*Rasā'il* III, 122) the *ma'ānī* are compared to souls and the sounds (*'alfāẓ*) to bodies. It would be wrong, however, to regard the *ma'ānī* of the 'Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafā' as a semantic correlate of sounds only, nor are they

identical with human thoughts. But in defining the *maʿānī* they link them with truth and reality:

"The definition of meaning is that it is every word that refers to reality and that leads to spiritual profit and whose existence in expressing it is true and in saying it is real" (*wa-ḥadd al-maʿnā ʾannahu kull kalima dallat ʿalā ḥaqīqa wa-ʾaršadat ʾilā manfaʿa wa-yakūnu wuǧūduhā fī l-ʾiḫbār bihā ṣidqan wa-l-qawl ʿalayhā ḥaqqan*, *Rasāʾil* III, 119.19–21)

In our world meanings need the sounds as their medium of transmission, but in the higher spheres they can be perceived in their pure form, without the help of the sounds:

"The meanings of these sounds [sc., on earth] are comprised in their articulation, but those sounds [sc., in the higher spheres] are entirely meaning; people here need someone to reveal their meanings to them and explain their purpose, whereas people there do not need that" (*wa-maʿānī hāḏihi l-ʾaṣwāt muḍammana fī ḥurūfihā wa-tilka kulluhā maʿānin; wa-ʾahl hāḏihi yaḥtāǧūna ʾilā man yakšifu lahum maʿānīhā wa-yadulluhum ʿalā marāmīhā, wa-ʾulāʾika lā yaḥtāǧūna ʾilā ḏālika*, *Rasāʾil* III, 117.15–17)

We are dealing here with *maʿānī* that have an existence independent of our intentions or linguistic structure: those pure *maʿānī* can be perceived only in higher spheres. This is the Islamic translation of the Neo-Platonic version of Plato's ideas.

The debate between logicians and grammarians as sketched above had nothing to do with this Neo-Platonic development and even within the general history of Islamic thinking it was a peculiar episode, brought on by the clash between two languages and cultures. In the Greek context, as far as we know, there was no similar discussion about the domain of grammar and logic, be it only, because the integration of grammar and logic in the Stoic tradition influenced the entire development of linguistic thinking during the Hellenistic period and even beyond, in the Byzantine period. In Islam the debate was short-lived: there was no possible reconciliation between the two traditions, and while grammarians took over a certain amount of formal features from logical writings, they kept their domain strictly separate from logic. The logicians, on the other hand, developed their own Islamic logic in a more or less conventional Aristotelian mould.

The most influential logician was no doubt al-Fārābī, the second Aristotle, as he was called (d. 339/950). He demonstrated his interest in grammar and linguistics by his contacts with grammarians. According to his biographers he took lessons with the grammarian Ibn as-Sarrāǧ (d. 316/928), who in his turn took lessons in logic and music from him. In al-Fārābī's writings we find

the traces of this contact between the two disciplines. In his catalogue of the sciences (*'Iḥṣā' al-ʿulūm*) he defines anew the relationship between logic and grammar and in the Book of Letters (*Kitāb al-ḥurūf*) he occupies himself with the nature of language as a social and rational phenomenon. Since he was in Baghdad at the time of the debate between Mattā ibn Yūnus and as-Sīrāfī, it is very well possible that he knew about the questions that had been raised in that debate. The discussion of the relationship between expressions and their meanings and the detailed analysis of the meanings of the particles in the *Kitāb al-ḥurūf* could have been intended as an answer to as-Sīrāfī's questions, which Mattā had been unable to answer.

In the catalogue of the sciences al-Fārābī defines the relationship between logic and grammar as follows:

> "This science [i.e., logic] is analogous to the science of grammar, because the relationship between logic, on the one hand, and reason and intelligibles, on the other, is the same as the relationship between grammar, on the one hand, and language and expressions, on the other, since logic gives us rules with respect to the intelligibles that are analogous to all the rules about the expressions which grammar gives us" (*wa-hāḏihi ṣ-ṣināʿa tunāsibu ṣināʿat an-naḥw wa-ḏālika 'anna nisba ṣināʿat al-manṭiq 'ilā l-ʿaql wa-l-maʿqūlāt ka-nisba ṣināʿat an-naḥw 'ilā l-lisān wa-l-'alfāẓ fa-kull mā yuʿṭīnā ʿilm an-naḥw min al-qawānīn fī l-'alfāẓ fa-'inna ʿilm al-manṭiq yuʿṭīnā naẓā'irahā fī l-maʿ-ʿqūlāt*, al-Fārābī, *'Iḥṣā'* 23.1–5)

In this division of tasks we see again that the study of rules for the expressions is relegated to the grammarian, whereas the logician deals with the intelligibles i.e., the meanings (in the logical sense). The only difference between al-Fārābī and Mattā is that al-Fārābī does not fall into the same trap as Mattā did because of his ignorance of the rules of Arabic grammar. He has been trained in grammar by his own pupil Ibn as-Sarrāǧ and demonstrates his knowledge of these rules in all of his writings. Basically, however, he maintains the division into expressions and meanings as the domains of the grammarian and the logician, respectively.

There is one more aspect to the division of labour between grammarians and logicians as the logicians envisage it. Although al-Fārābī does not say so explicitly in the passage quoted here, he regards the expertise of the grammarians as limited to the rules of the expressions in one particular language. The logician, on the other hand, deals with the intelligibles that are identical for all nations. Thus, the work of the logician has a universal applicability that is lacking in the work of the grammarian.

6. The relationship between rhetoric and grammar

Although the introduction of Greek logical doctrine and the ensuing debate between logicians and grammarians left the core of syntactic studies intact, it was not without influence in linguistics. Not only did the grammarians feel forced to alter the presentation of their ideas and theories, for instance, by including proper definitions of the notions they operated with, but a general dissatisfaction with the purely formalistic approach of conventional grammar led to a number of attempts to change the character of linguistics as a discipline by introducing a renewed interest in the semantic aspects of speech. In spite of the self-assurance of as-Sīrāfī, whose position in the debate we discussed in the preceding section, some scholars felt that the current formalism in linguistics did not do justice to the complex character of the phenomenon of language. In their attempts at innovation these scholars followed some tendencies that had never been completely absent from the philological tradition: after all, even when grammarians dedicated their treatises to the formal analysis of linguistic structure, they also occupied themselves with poetry and the *Qur'ān*.

The most interesting representative of this new approach is ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Ǧurǧānī (d. 471/1078), who is well-known for his treatises about rhetoric, dealing among other things with the inimitable style of the *Qur'ān* (*'iʿǧāz al-Qur'ān*), but who was also an accomplished linguist. His grammatical ideas have become available to us since the publication in 1982 of his large commentary, *al-Muqtaṣid*, on al-Fārisī's *'Īḍāḥ*. In this commentary al-Ǧurǧānī's opinions do not exhibit any major differences with standard grammatical theory, but in his other writings he criticizes the grammarians openly for not taking into account the semantic differences between various constructions, but concentrating exclusively on the formal-syntactic differences.

As an example we may quote here the difference between the so-called nominal and verbal sentences. According to the Arab grammarians there are two types of sentence, one of them consisting of topic and predicate (*mubtada' wa-ḫabar*), the other of verb and agent (*fiʿl wa-fā'il*), e.g.,

zaydun kataba
mubtada' ḫabar
Zayd he-wrote

kataba zaydun
fiʿl fāʿil
wrote Zayd

In the traditional Arabic analysis these sentences are differentiated not because of their different word order, but because of their different behaviour in congruence: in the first sentence, which consists of a topic and a predicate, there is congruence in number between the noun and the verb, whereas in the second sentence, which consists of a verb and its agent, there is none, as becomes clear when we put both sentences in the plural:

az-zaydūna katabū
the-Zayds they-wrote

kataba z-zaydūna
wrote the-Zayds

There are, indeed, independent reasons to posit a different underlying structure for these two types (cf. Ayoub & Bohas 1983), rather than follow the traditional Western analysis, which regards the two sentences as stylistic alternatives of an identical subject/predicate structure. Quite apart from the congruential difference between the two sentences it is preferable to interpret *zaydun* in the sentence *zaydun kataba* as the topic of a predicate which consists of a verb and a (hidden) agent. Sībawayhi seems to be aware of the topical function of the first noun in this sentence type, since he refers to the *ʿināya wa-htimām* "attention and interest" of the speaker, which determines the choice between the two sentence types: in the case of *zaydun kataba* the interest of the speaker is concentrated on Zayd, whereas in the sentence *kataba zaydun* it is Zayd's action on which the speaker focuses.

The point is, however, that Sībawayhi does not analyze these vague notions any further and in explaining the difference between the two sentences he contents himself with a discussion of the difference in syntactic behaviour. This is the gist of al-Ǧurǧānī's criticism: in limiting himself to the difference in constituent structure Sībawayhi neglects the semantic difference between the two basic sentence types. His purpose in the *Kitāb* is restricted to the explanation of the form of sentences. As we have seen above, Sībawayhi acknowledges the existence of a semantic level but since he takes its existence for granted he does not appear to feel any need for dealing with it explicitly. In the example discussed here the semantic difference between nominal and verbal sentences is not mentioned as a differentiating factor or as an argument for a different constituent structure. Al-Ǧurǧānī, on the other hand, "judges linguistic usage by the criterion of *maʿnā*" (Baalbaki 1983: 12) and seeks to explain the different choices of the speakers by an underlying semantic difference.

In order to prove that his approach differs from that of the grammarians (*naḥwiyyūn*), al-Ǧurǧānī explains that the grammarians are guilty of negligence in their analysis of the nominal and verbal sentence. He himself, on the other hand, proposes a detailed analysis of the influence the focus in the mind of the speaker has on the structure of the sentence (*Dalā'il* 82–104 *al-qawl fī t-taqdīm wa-t-ta'ḫīr* "theory about fronting and postposing"). The examples he gives concern, for instance, the scope of a negation or an interrogation in the mind of the speaker and its effect on the order of the words in the uttered sentence (cf. Simon 1993:17–18).

The analysis of the nominal and verbal sentence is not the only example of al-Ǧurǧānī's semantic approach. In other cases, too, he points out that his analysis is superior to that of his predecessors and that those constructions that are regarded as equivalent by them must be differentiated on the semantic level. For Sībawayhi, the two sentences *'inna zaydan la-fā'ilun* "indeed, Zayd is doing" and *'inna zaydan la-yaf'alu* "indeed, Zayd does" are syntactically equivalent in that both the participle and the imperfect verb act as predicate to the particle *'inna* with its noun, and this closes the matter for him. But true to his principle, al-Ǧurǧānī (*Dalā'il* 133–36; cf. Baalbaki 1983:13) explains that there is, in fact, a large semantic difference between the two: in this construction the participle does not imply repetition, whereas the imperfect verb does. Other examples of his emphasis on the meaning of syntactic aspects include the use of *'innamā* "only", a particle which is treated by Sībawayhi only with respect to its government, and variations in word order. In both cases al-Ǧurǧānī tries to improve on the syntactic descriptions of his predecessors by showing how the use of the particle or the use of an alternative word order may influence the overall meaning of the utterance.

In his linguistic works al-Ǧurǧānī seems to have followed a more conventional pattern. It is interesting to compare his approach in the *Dalā'il* with his own remarks in a more linguistic context, in his commentary *al-Muqtaṣid* (I, 327–28): there he explains the difference between *zaydun ḍaraba* "Zayd, he hit" and *ḍaraba zaydun* "Zayd hit" with a purely syntactic argument, viz. the lack of congruence in the verbal sentence. In his rhetorical works he concentrates on the 'meaning' of the message, which for him is closely connected with the organization or structure of discourse. The central notion in his theory of language is that differences in the form of the utterance always reflect a different *ma'nā*. This difference is not situated at the level of the lexical meaning of the sentential constituents, but it is of a higher order:

"Gegenstand seiner Sprachbetrachtung ist daher nicht das Einzelwort, sondern das Verhältnis von sprachlicher Fügung und zugrundeliegendem Gedankeninhalt. Die Ordnung der Worte sei abgeleitet von einer entsprechenden Ordnung der Vorstellungen, die sich in der Psyche nach den Gesetzen der Vernunft verknüpfen" (Simon 1993:16)

Because of this structural relationship the correspondence between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* is univocal, and the slightest difference in meaning (i.e., the connection between the thoughts of the speaker) affects the structure of the utterance (i.e., the connection between the words in the sentence), or as Kouloughli (1983:60) puts it:

"Il s'ensuit un renversement total du rapport *lafẓ/maʿnā*: en effet, alors que dans l'acception primitive du terme *maʿnā* deux textes différents pouvaient avoir le même *maʿnā*, et qu'en conséquence le principe de différenciation des textes résidait dans la différence de *lafẓ*, il faut au contraire poser, dans la nouvelle problématique, que la différence de forme a pour *origine* une différence de *maʿnā*; cette différence est même la condition nécessaire et suffisante pour que les deux textes aient des *naẓm* différents, c'est-à-dire pour qu'ils soient deux textes différents"

Here Kouloughli refers to another central notion in al-Ǧurǧānī's thinking, that of *naẓm*, literally "order", which reflects the inherent harmony of speech. According to al-Ǧurǧānī the order of the constituents in speech and their syntactic relationships reflects the ordering of the elements in thought, and his constant concern was to analyze the meaning of words within a context. Al-Ǧurǧānī was certainly not the first scholar to turn his attention to stylistic/semantic aspects of language (cf. Sezgin 1984:10–11), but his contributions led to a shift in orientation for linguistics. The introduction of his innovations into linguistics, releasing it from its purely syntactic bonds, marked a new period in the development of the discipline, which culminated in as-Sakkākī's (d. 626/1228) attempt to integrate all language sciences. In his *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* "Key of the sciences" he announces his purpose of establishing a *ʿilm al-ʾadab* "science of humanities", which was to comprise all sciences that deal with language in one way or another (cf. Moutaouakil 1982:45–47):

"what convinced me to do this [sc., dealing with all linguistic sciences in one volume] is that the foremost aim of the *ʿilm al-ʾadab* ... is the avoidance of mistakes in the language of the Arabs" (*wa-llaḏī qtaḍā ʿindī hāḏā huwa ʾanna l-ġaraḍ al-ʾaqdam min ʿilm al-ʾadab ... huwa l-iḥtirāz ʿan al-ḫaṭaʾ fī kalām al-ʿArab*, as-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ* 8.2–3)

The new science was to consist of three subdivisions: the sciences of the simple utterance (*ʿilm al-luġa*, *ʿilm aṣ-ṣarf*); the science of the composite utterance (*ʿilm an-naḥw*); and the sciences that deal with the adequate rela-

tionship between the composite utterance and the speech situation (*ʿilm al-maʿānī*, *ʿilm al-bayān*; *ʿilm al-istidlāl*). It is fairly easy to define the domain of those sciences in the scheme that deal with the simple utterance and the composite utterance: *ʿilm al-luġa* corresponds with lexicology and *ʿilm aṣ-ṣarf* with (derivational) morphology and morphonology. *ʿIlm an-naḥw* is the traditional name for the discipline of linguistics in the Arabic tradition but it also indicates the specialized domain of syntax, including inflectional morphology. It is more difficult to determine the subject matter of the third subdivision in as-Sakkākī's scheme. Literally, *ʿilm al-maʿānī* means "the science of the meanings", *ʿilm al-bayān* "the science of elocution" and *ʿilm al-istidlāl* "the science of argumentation, deduction". But what are the meanings studied by the science of meanings?

In the introduction to the section of his book that deals with the *ʿilm al-maʿānī* and the *ʿilm al-bayān* as-Sakkākī briefly defines the domain of these two sciences. Just like the other linguistic sciences, the main purpose of the "science of the meanings" is the avoidance of errors:

> "Know that the science of the meanings is the observation of the particular constructions of speech in communication and the embellishment and so on accompanying them, so that by occupying itself with them it avoids errors in the application of speech to whatever the circumstances make us say" (*iʿlam ʾanna ʿilm al-maʿānī huwa tatabbuʿ ḫawāṣṣ tarākīb al-kalām fī l-ʾifāda wa-mā yattaṣilu bihā min al-istiḥsān wa-ġayrihi li-yaḥtariza bi-l-wuqūf ʿalayhā ʿan al-ḫaṭaʾ fī taṭbīq al-kalām ʿalā mā yaqtaḍī l-ḥāl ḏikrahu*, as-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ* 161.7–9)

The "constructions" (*tarākīb al-kalām*) referred to in this quotation are exemplified by the author later on, when he explains that when the hearer hears the expression *ʾinna zaydan munṭaliqun* "Zayd is leaving, indeed", he knows that the intention (*maqṣūd*) of this utterance is the denial of any doubt. Other examples include predication, requests, questions and so on. In other words, the meanings studied by the *ʿilm al-maʿānī* are identical with the *maʿānī l-kalām* we have compared above (Section 3) to the notion of 'sentential types' or 'moods'. It appears that in this section on the 'science of meanings' as-Sakkākī's interest concentrates on the study of the sentential meanings in the sense of the structure of the pre-verbal message in which the speaker indicates his 'mood' towards the message. His theory is not a general theory of semantics but remains restricted to the domain of the sentence types and their correct application to the train of thought.

The *ʿilm al-bayān* "science of rhetoric" (cf. Simon 1993:38–47), however, deals with a different kind of meaning, inasmuch as this can be expressed in different ways (*huwa maʿrifa ʾīrād al-maʿnā al-wāḥid fī ṭuruq*

muḫtalifa, *Miftāḥ* 162.8). This section of his book contains a comprehensive theory of the metaphorical use of language, in which three kinds of signification (*dalāla*) are distinguished. First, the *dalālat al-muṭābaqa* "signification of symmetry", which covers the conventional relationship between words and referents, for instance when you compare the cheek of the beloved to a rose by saying "your cheek resembles a rose". This comparison is understood by the hearers on the basis of their knowledge of the meaning of the words (*mafhūmāt al-lafẓ*). In the other two kinds of signification, the *dalālat at-taḍammun* "signification of inclusion" and *dalālat al-iltizām* "signification of implication", the hearers need their intellect in order to understand the relationship between the two sides of the comparison, for instance when a house is called a roof, or when a man is called a lion. When *ma'nā* is used in this connection, it appears to refer to the lexical meaning of the word, i.e., the meaning for which the word is primarily used. Finally, the sixth science, *'ilm al-istidlāl* "science of argumentation" checks the correctness of the arguments used in speaking.

By his inclusion of sub-disciplines that were to deal with the *ma'ānī* and the *bayān* as-Sakkākī achieved a synthesis of all language sciences for the first time in Arabic linguistics. These sub-disciplines are necessary, the author states (*Miftāḥ* 8.7–8), because errors in speaking can result from three domains: single words, composite expressions, and "the correct application of the composite expression to that for which it must be used" (*wa-kawn al-murakkab muṭābiqan limā yaǧibu 'an yutakallama lahu*).

Although Arab grammarians continued to produce traditional treatises of morphology and syntax after the 5th/11th century, most linguists could not afford passing without mention the semantic aspects of language that had been introduced by writers such as al-Ǧurǧānī and as-Sakkākī. The effects of their innovations are clearly visible in the writings of some of the best later writers. As an example we may mention here Ibn Hišām (d. 761/1359), who in his *Muġnī l-labīb 'an kutub al-'a'ārīb*—the full title means something like "The treatise that makes it unnecessary for people of sound judgment to read the books of the true Bedouin"—provides a veritable catalogue of semantic analyses of Arabic grammar, with special emphasis on the difference between seemingly synonymous sentential constructions.

Just like al-Ǧurǧānī did, Ibn Hišām also devotes a large part of his work to the analysis of the meaning of the particles. The entire first volume of the *Muġnī* is an alphabetically ordered discussion of the functions of particles. Such a treatment of the particles is unparalleled in the Arabic tradition. As

an example we may quote here his treatment of the meanings or functions of the definite article *al-* (*Muġnī* I, 49–55; cf. Gully [1991:113–15]). Earlier grammarians had contented themselves with the statement that the article serves to indicate previous knowledge (*ʿahdiyya*), but Ibn Hišām proceeds to give an analysis of the notion of 'previous knowledge', which he classifies into several types (*maʿhūd ḏikriyyan* "textual anaphora", *maʿhūd ḏihniyyan* "extra-textual anaphora", *maʿhūd ḥuḍūriyyan* "deixis"). In this connection he also deals with the various possibilities of using the article with a generic meaning. According to Gully (1991:107) Ibn Hišām's interest was not in the formal side of the use of particles (e.g., their role as governors), but in the semantics of their use, i.e., their function in communication.

The examples given here of Ibn Hišām's treatment of the particles demonstrate that his semantic interest had nothing to do with the conceptual significates (*maʿānī*) on which the rhetoricians focused in their debates about the priority of *lafẓ* or *maʿnā*, or the logicians in their discussions about the domains of grammar and logic. Rather one might say that his use of the term *maʿnā* has developed from its functional use in Arabic grammar, represented by the MAʿNĀ II of Guillaume & Bohas (1984), i.e,, the meaning of a grammatical category in terms of its function in speech. This function is inextricably linked with the ultimate purpose of speaking, which is the conveying of *fā'ida* "communicative value".

The functional approach was compared by Larcher (1992) to a 'pragmatic' approach, since in their analysis of the phenomenon of speech later grammatical writers became increasingly concerned with the relationship between the use of linguistic signs and the presuppositions of hearer/speaker in a speech context. Larcher illustrates this with al-'Astarābāḏī's (d. after 688/1289) analysis of the function of the performative functions of utterances. The particle *lākinna* "but", for instance, implies the sense of *istadraktu* "I rectify", since the speaker 'rectifies' the (false) expectation of the hearer after hearing the first part of the sentence (Larcher 1990:197–98). The *maʿnā* of the particle is, therefore, connected not only with its function in the sentence, but also with the intention or purpose of the speaker in his communicative act. In this analysis, the intention of the speaker is included insofar as it is closely linked with the verbal message.

The scholars who succeeded al-Ǧurǧānī and as-Sakkākī and followed their methods did not deal with the intention of the speaker in the sense of the creative thought process that precedes the message. Yet, their preoccupation with the semantic side of language made it much easier for them to include

pragmatic and communicational considerations in their theories. We have seen above that this aspect was never completely absent from the Arabic linguistic tradition—after all, God had created language for the purpose of communication among human beings—but if one reads the more technical treatises of the early grammarians, one gets the impression that the role of the speaker and the position of the hearer were not the focus of their argument. The technical trend never disappeared completely from the Arabic tradition, but in the later period linguists were more or less expected to take into account the context of speech in their analysis of speech elements.

7. Towards a theory of signification

The writers mentioned in the preceding section touched upon the aspect of communication in their work, but a different integration of communicational and semiotic aspects of speech was achieved by those writers who are collectively called the *'uṣūliyyūn*, the people who concern themselves with the *'uṣūl* "principles". The principles in question are those of law (*'uṣūl al-fiqh*), and at first sight it may seem strange that for a development in linguistic theories we have to turn to the legal sciences. Makdisi (1984) has shown, however, that the science of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh* was a linguistic rather than a legal science. This discipline originated in the 4th/10th century as an initiative of Mu'tazilī thinkers. After the failure of the Miḥna, the inquisition instigated by the Caliph al-Ma'mūn which strove after the public acceptance of Mu'tazilī dogmas, Mu'tazilites had been more or less banned from official theology (*kalām*). As a result, they attempted to infiltrate other disciplines in order to propagate their ideas. Mu'tazilī thinking had always had a linguistic streak, but in the 4th/10th century the combination of grammar and Mu'tazilite ideas came to a climax. Almost all grammarians in this period, including such famous ones as Ibn Ǧinnī (d. 392/1002), showed a marked affinity with Mu'tazilite ideas.

We find, for instance, in az-Zaǧǧāǧī references to such well-known Mu'tazilī dogmas as *al-kalām huwa fi'l al-mutakallim* "speech is an act of the speaker" and *al-ism huwa ġayr al-musammā* "the name (*ism*) is not identical with the nominatum (*musammā*)". Although az-Zaǧǧāǧī himself does not say explicitly that these theories are Mu'tazilite in origin, we know from other sources that they represent essential points of Mu'tazilite theology. During the Miḥna the official point of view on the status of the *Qur'ān* had been forcefully imposed on all judges, jurisconsults and state employees in general:

henceforth, everybody had to profess that the *Qur'ān* was created by God, and not an uncreated, eternal entity, as the orthodox believers held. This dogma of the creation of the *Qur'ān* (*ḫalq al-Qur'ān*) was part of a comprehensive theological system, in which man's free will, God's justice and God's absolute unity were the central themes. In support of their ideas on the status of the *Qur'ān*, the Mu'tazilites had to deal with the status of God's speech and hence with the status of speech in general. This explains their interest in the problem of the nature of speech and the relationship between name and referent. If speech is an act of the speaker, clearly the *Qur'ān* as God's word is something created by Him, and analogously, the speech utterances of the believers are their own acts.

Ibn Ǧinnī goes so far as to maintain that the knowledge of grammar is the best way to avoid theological errors, for instance in discussions about the attributes of God (*Ḫaṣā'iṣ* III, 245ff.). Most people, he states, are not aware of the fact that language is often used metaphorically and they interpret those Qur'ānic verses in which reference is made to God's throne or God's hands in a literal sense. This is a grave error and in direct opposition to the Mu'tazilite dogma of God's unity which precludes the existence of co-existential attributes with the same status as God Himself. As a logical consequence of their ideas about God's attributes the Mu'tazilites had to regard names as signs that were part of a process of name-giving (*tasmiya*), and not as something identical with their referents; otherwise, the names of God would be just as eternal as He is, which would threaten His unique position.

In the literature this theorem is often referred to with the slogan *al-ism huwa ġayr al-musammā* "the name is not identical with the nominatum", which is the form in which it appears in the grammarian az-Zaǧǧāǧī. The debate about the relationship between *ism* and *musammā* may be summarized with Ibn al-Ḥāǧib's (d. 646/1248) brief statement about the status of the nominatum:

> "Some of them say that the name is the name-giving, and this is the doctrine of the Mu'tazila and the grammarians and many of the jurisconsults. Others say that the name is the nominatum, and this is the opinion of al-'Aš'arī" (*minhum man yaqūlu: al-ism huwa t-tasmiya wa-huwa maḏhab al-Mu'tazila wa-n-naḥwiyyīn wa-kaṯīr min al-fuqahā', wa-minhum man yaqūlu: al-ism huwa l-musammā wa-huwa maḏhab al-'Aš'arī*, Ibn al-Ḥāǧib, *Šarḥ al-Mufaṣṣal* I, 417)

What is the *musammā*? Ibn Ǧinnī draws a very clear distinction between 'name' and 'referent', when he says (*Ḫaṣā'iṣ* III, 31.5–10) that when you ask someone what the spelling is of the word *sayf* "sword", and he answers

"*s-y-f*", you are dealing with a name (*ism*). But when you ask him with what he hit someone, and he answers "with a *sayf* 'sword'", you are dealing with a nominatum (*musammā*). In this distinction, *musammā* denotes an object in the physical, extra-linguistic world, which is the referent of the word *sayf*. It is highly probable that at first, the term *musammā* "nominatum" indicated the extra-linguistic referent of the name (*ism*), but as the debate became more and more sophisticated, it came to be used much more frequently for the conceptual referent of the *ism*.

As an example of this latter use, we may turn to al-Ġazzālī's (d. 402/1111) theory of signification. He distinguishes three modes of being (cf. Gätje 1974): a physical level, a psychological level, and a linguistic level. Within this framework words correlate with concepts in the mind, which in their turn correlate with objects in the outer world. In such a conventional Aristotelian scheme the *musammā* of a name is the mental correlate of a linguistic entity, not the physical object, and this is the way the term is used by most later philosophers. But in the debate about the identity of the name some Mu'tazilite scholars used the inherent ambiguity of the term to ridicule their opponents. They said, for instance, that if the name were identical with the *musammā*, pronouncing the word 'fire' would burn your mouth (cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd* 232). In this caricature of the opponents' position, *musammā* is identified with the physical referent of the word.

The opposition of the Mu'tazila to the thesis of the identity of name and nominatum had to do with their ideas about God's unity. We have seen above that they feared that words being associated with God as attributes could be regarded as co-eternal with Him, which would destroy the very basis of their monotheism. Therefore, they opposed this thesis and claimed, instead, that the name is identical with the *tasmiya*, the act of name-giving. In linguistic theory proper the debate played a very subordinate role, and the only reason why some grammarians mentioned it—as Ibn Ǧinnī and Ibn al-Ḥāǧib did—is that most grammarians in the 4th-5th/10th-11th centuries held Mu'tazilite ideas. For the development of ideas about the nature of speech and about the semantic component of language the debate was of slight importance.

There is, however, one result of the debate that opened up a new avenue of research. The Mu'tazilites attempted to defuse the debate about the *ism* and the *musammā* with its threat to their ideas on the unity of God, by assigning the *musammā* to the realm of the extra-linguistic objects. This gave them the opportunity to ridicule the thesis of identity between name and nominatum. But it also gave grammarians an impetus to investigate more thoroughly

the relationship between words and things. We know that at least one Mu'tazilite, 'Abbād ibn Sulaymān (d. 230/844), held that there is a natural relationship (*munāsaba ṭabī'iyya*) between words and objects (cf. Mahdi 1970:52, n. 2). This idea originated in the context of a discussion about the origin of speech, but it was taken up by a few grammarians who became interested in the phenomenon of onomatopoeia.

Ibn Ğinnī devoted to this topic three chapters in his *Ḫaṣā'iṣ* about "sounds that fit the meanings" (*bāb fī taṣāqub al-'alfāẓ li-taṣāqub al-ma'ānī*; II, 145ff.), about "the power of the sound as corresponding with the power of the meaning" (*bāb fī quwwat al-lafẓ li-quwwat al-ma'nā*; III, 264ff.), and about "sounds that imitate the meanings" (*bāb fī 'imsās al-'alfāẓ 'ašbāh al-ma'ānī*; II, 152ff.). His use of the word *ma'ānī* in a non-linguistic sense is significant. Clearly, his meanings are neither the correlates of the sounds within linguistic entities, nor the intentions of the speakers, nor any kind of abstract concepts denoted by the *lafẓ*: they must be the extra-linguistic objects, whose 'names' carry some acoustic quality that reminds the hearer of the object itself. Ibn Ğinnī maintains, for instance, that the sound of the words *ḫaḍm* "to eat" and *qaḍm* "to crunch" indicates the kind of food that is eaten: the former is used for the eating of fresh herbs and vegetables, whereas the latter is used for hard and dry things (*Ḫaṣā'iṣ* II, 157.13—158.2). Another example is that of the verb *baḥaṯa* "to scrape the earth", in which each consonant evokes a different kind of scraping: the *b* the sound of a hand striking the earth, the *ḥ* the sound of an animal's paws, and the *ṯ* the sound of the sand being pushed aside (*Ḫaṣā'iṣ* I, 162). We assume that the discussion of issues such as these was made possible or at least facilitated by the Mu'tazilite introduction of new ideas about the *ism* and the *musammā*, and their (polemical) identification of the *musammā* as the physical referent of the word.

When *musammā* is the physical referent of words, what then about their meaning? A central notion in Mu'tazilite doctrine is that of *ma'nā*, which they use both in its broad sense of 'meaning' and in the much narrower sense of 'determinant of the thing's being so'. What they mean by the latter becomes clear when 'Abd al-Ğabbār (*Muġnī* IV, 19; V, 253; cf. Heemskerk 1995:72–86) explains the existence of states in a body: when we are moving or desiring or hearing, our bodies are in a state that may appear or disappear. The change in state is the effect of a cause (*'illa*), which he identifies with a qualifier or determinant, i.e., the *ma'nā* 'movement' or 'desire'. The qualifier is "something whose existence has been established" (*aš-šay' al-muṯbat*), namely by

the fact that the state in the body has appeared, and it is an incorporeal entity. This usage of the term *ma'nā* with the features of causality and incorporeality comes close to the Stoic use of *lektón*, which has the same lexical meaning as *ma'nā*, so that it is very likely that there is a connection between the two terms.

In Mu'tazilite philosophy the debate about the *ma'nā* centered about the question of whether this abstract notion resided in the objects or in the mind. Most Mu'tazilites held that the *ma'ānī* are coexistent 'causal determinants' within each object, determining the inhering of its accidents. Since each *ma'nā* is in its turn determined by another *ma'nā*, the result is an infinite series of *ma'ānī*. Obviously, there is a certain connection with the notion of 'concept', but they are certainly not identical, as 'Abd al-Ǧabbār informs us in a chapter entitled *Fī 'ibṭāl al-qawl bi-'anna l-kalām ma'nan qā'im fī n-nafs* "Refutation of the theory that speech is a meaning residing in the mind". He stresses the fact that there is no identity between thought and expression, otherwise it would be impossible to say of someone that he is speaking without thinking ('Abd al-Ǧabbār, *Muġnī* VII, 14–20).

In the writings of some philosophers the notion of an 'incorporeal entity' which causes the bodies' qualities comes close to the Platonic ideas (*eídê*) as abstract correlates of the physical objects, representing the core of their essence, but existing independently of them. This use of *ma'nā* in the sense of 'abstract notion' has created some confusion in Islamic philosophy, in particular in the translations of the Aristotelian writings. We have mentioned above that in grammatical terminology *ism ma'nā* is an abstract noun and speculated that this usage may go back to the Greek term *prãgma* used by the Stoa as a synonym of *lektón* in the sense of 'abstract notion'. If this hypothesis is correct, it could explain the confusing fact that some Arabic writers use *ma'ānī* also as the translation of the Aristotelian *prágmata*, i.e., the physical objects (e.g. Fārābī, *Šarḥ* 27.23 = Aristotle, *de interpret.* 16a7). Others use *ma'nā* as the translation of the Aristotelian *nóēma* "conceptual entity" (cf. van Ess 1970:33, n. 62), in line with the role of the *ma'nā* as conceptual referent in some Islamic thinkers. Followers of the Peripatetic philosophy in Islam, such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037) and Ibn Rušd (d. 595/1198), used the term for yet another purpose and stated that the *ma'nā* is that which the mind perceives in an object, but which the senses cannot perceive, i.e., the essential qualities of that object. Here the use of *ma'nā* as abstract notion comes close to the Aristotelian notion of 'form'.

The connection between grammar and Mu'tazila paved the way, so to

speak, for a new science, that of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh*, which tried to give an account of the referential relationship between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*. Just as the Muʿtazilites after their banishment from official theology infiltrated the ranks of the grammarians, they also found their way into the legal sciences, by setting up a special discipline that concerned itself with the systematic study of the principles underlying the legal reasoning applied by judges and jurisconsults to concrete cases of legal conflict. Through this discipline, which was called *ʿilm 'uṣūl al-fiqh* "science of the principles of law", they managed to salvage many of their ideas about the status of speech and even to introduce them into the official, orthodox study of law. The debate about *ism/musammā*, mentioned above, was but a part of the efforts made by the Muʿtazilī legal scholars to get a grip on the relationship between names and their referents, which constituted an essential constituent of legal theory. Legal reasoning in Islam is based on interpretation of written precepts on concrete cases, whose applicability to new cases has to be established by a system of analogical rules. A theoretical approach to such a legal system must needs concern itself with concepts such as the extension of meaning and the relationship between form and meaning.

The legal scholars' interest in the application of legal texts to concrete instances of human behaviour naturally led to an emphasis on various aspects of communication that was mostly lacking in the purely technical grammatical treatises. Even though, as we have seen above, the grammarians defined the purpose of speech as the communication of thought, as a rule they did not regard communication as an object of study *per se*. In the introduction to his manual on *'uṣūl al-fiqh*, entitled *'Iḥkām al-'aḥkām*, al-'Āmidī (d. 631/1233) explains the purpose of speech by referring to the main task of all rational beings, viz., to grasp the essence of all things created. An individual is unable to collect all knowledge he needs for that purpose and therefore:

> "necessity forces him to set up signs with which every individual can acquire knowledge of the information in the mind of other people which can help him to realize this purpose" (*daʿat al-ḥāǧa 'ilā naṣb dalā'il yatawaṣṣalu bihā kull wāḥid 'ilā maʿrifa mā fī ḍamīr al-'āḫar min al-maʿlūmāt al-muʿīna lahu fī taḥqīq ġaraḍihi*, al-'Āmidī, *'Iḥkām* I, 15.9–16.2)

The easiest medium to gain access to other people's minds is the medium of speech, for which you do not need any instrument, which is available at any given moment, and which disappears when you no longer need it. This is the reason why human beings received the gift of language from God. In the context of the study of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh*, as in grammar, the main purpose

of speech is communication. But in legal theory communication in general and language in particular are studied because of their role in the establishment of legal rulings, whereas in grammar language is studied for its own sake. Unlike legal scholars most linguists concentrate on the internal structure of grammar rather than the way language functions in human society.

It is instructive to see which tasks al-'Āmidī in his introduction assigns to the study of those linguistic phenomena that are of interest to the legal scholar (*'Iḥkām* I, 9). Significantly, he does not call the science dealing with those linguistic topics that are relevant for the study of the legal principles "the science of grammar" but chooses a general term, "the science of Arabic" (*'ilm al-'arabiyya*). This science deals with the knowledge of the significations of the linguistic signs (*dalālat al-'adilla al-lafẓiyya*), including literal and figurative meaning; general and particular expressions; absolute and relative expressions; deletion; ellipsis (*'iḍmār*); explicit and implicit speech (*manṭūq wa-mafhūm*); exigence (*iqtiḍā'*); reference (*'išāra*); reminder (*tanbīh*); pointing out (*'īmā'*), etc. Without going into the exact contents of all these topics we observe that these are not the topics that are usually dealt with in Arabic linguistic treatises. In the study of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh* the discussion centers on the semiotic relationship between sign and referent, between expression and meaning, and avoids the treatment of morphological and syntactic problems. To mention but one example: when the *'uṣūliyyūn* deal with ellipsis (*'iḍmār*) they do so in order to explain the possibility of communication with a truncated message, and their aim is not the reconstruction of an underlying structure to explain the surface sentence.

In the passage from al-'Āmidī's introduction quoted above the term *dalā'il* "signs" was used to indicate the linguistic signs that communicate the meaning. This is not the usual term for 'expression' in linguistic treatises, but in the *'uṣūl al-fiqh* the radicals *d-l-l* were often used in the terminology that described the relationship between sign and meaning in a message. The process of signifying was indicated with a derivate from these radicals, *dalāla*. Originally, this must have been a calque from the Greek *sēmeiṓsis*, from which our term 'semiotics' is derived. We have seen above (Section 4) that the Arabic logicians already used this root in their designation of the pair 'signifying'/'signified': *dāll/madlūl*. In modern Arabic linguistic terminology *'ilm ad-dalāla* is sometimes used to translate 'semantics', probably as a calque from Western terminology.

In the course of time, long after the Classical period of Arabic grammar, the study of the relationship between expression and meaning developed into

a special science, called the *waḍʿ al-luġa*. In the debate about the origin of speech *waḍʿ al-luġa* had meant "imposition of speech [by a name-giver]", but as the name of a new science it came to mean the study of the various ways in which words conventionally signify their meanings. The first author to write about the *waḍʿ al-luġa* as a special subject was al-'Īǧī (d. 746/1355); as a separate science it was not acknowledged until the 18th century CE. The authors of the treatises on the *waḍʿ al-luġa* were not interested in the actual process of imposition of speech, but in the result of this imposition, which manifested itself in the given meaning of linguistic expressions.

The ultimate aim of their discipline was to assist the *'uṣūliyyūn* in deriving legal rulings from the texts in the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīṯ*, the traditions of the Prophet, that reveal God's prescriptions. Weiss (1966:91) points out the relationship between the theory behind the *waḍʿ al-luġa* and modern theories of name-relation:

> "In this theory, meaning is conceived in terms of simple 'standing-for'. The meaning of an expression is that for which the expression stands, that for which the expression is a name".

In the Arabic theory of name-relation, expressions are not names of objects in the outer world, as in the earliest theories on *ism/musammā*, but of (pre-existent) ideas in the mind (*ṣuwar ḏihniyya*), which are variably referred to as *maʿnā*, *madlūl*, *mafhūm*. The aim of the science of the *waḍʿ al-luġa* is to explain the given character of the linguistic elements by exploring the process of name-giving in this special sense (Weiss 1955:92). This process is seen in simple terms as the act of the creator of language, whether this was God or man, who collected ideas of all existing things and then assigned expressions to these ideas. The meaning of an expression is an idea, in other words its meaning is that for which the expression has been established by the creator of language. Consequently, in the science of the *waḍʿ al-luġa* every expression has a meaning, including the pronominal elements and the purely grammatical markers or the particles, since they have all been established for a conventional meaning. Thus, for instance, the particle *wa-* "and" has been established for the idea of "and-ness" or "combination", for which it is the name (Weiss 1966:148). The authors of the treatises on the *waḍʿ al-luġa* did not content themselves with an enumeration of the functions of a particle in language, but aimed at the elucidation of the pre-existent idea for which it stood. Knowledge of the language means knowledge of the ideas for which the expressions stand. In this final stage of Arabic semantics, which stretched into the 20th century, a complete and exhaustive inventory was

made of all the meanings, for which linguistic elements have been established.

8. Conclusion

In the preceding sections we have given a survey of various approaches to 'meaning' in the Arabic tradition. The linguistic approach originated in a crude form of hermeneutics of the Qur'ānic text, but developed into a powerful formal-syntactic system. Originally the commentators were solely interested in finding out the intention of the speaker, i.e., God's intention in His revelation. In order to find out this intention they devised a series of procedures that became the earliest technical instruments for the analysis of speech. The semantic approach of the exegetes was transformed into a purely syntactic analysis by the early grammarians of the Basran school, who built on the work of Sībawayhi (end of the 2nd/8th century). In his linguistic system the element of meaning was taken for granted but did not constitute an object of study as such. One might almost say that from the times of Sībawayhi onwards the Arab grammarians accepted the existence of a semantic aspect of speech but felt this to be outside the scope of their own task, which was the elucidation of the syntactic changes in speech (the theory of governance and declensional endings). The analysis of the lexical meaning of words was left to the lexicographers, who codified these meanings in their dictionaries.

In technical grammar the term *maʿnā* was used mainly for the function of grammatical categories, although the grammarians continued to use the term also as a synonym for the underlying meaning of an utterance, thus contributing to the general terminological confusion. They almost never attempted to define the term explicitly. Throughout the history of Arabic linguistics the term *lafẓ* continued to serve as the antonym of *maʿnā*, indicating the physical correlate of whatever abstract notion *maʿnā* was currently standing for.

The general attitude of the linguists towards meaning changed drastically when they were challenged by the universalist claims of the logicians who tried to monopolize the study of meaning. In the discussions between the logicians and grammarians, culminating in the famous debate between Mattā ibn Yūnus and as-Sīrāfī, the term *maʿnā* was used by the two parties in a different sense: for the logicians the *maʿānī* were the universal concepts, expressed by the accidental forms in individual languages, whereas the grammarians saw in the *maʿānī* a language-linked semantic side of the expression. These discussions were instrumental in extending the scope of linguis-

tics. In the 4th-5th/10th-11th centuries this led to a new science of *maʿānī*, in which the formalist outlook of most linguists was integrated in a comprehensive theory of language. This crucial innovation is connected with the name of al-Ǧurǧānī, whose explicit criticism of the grammarians' formalism brought about a renewed interest in the semantic analysis of the functions of grammatical categories and sentence types. His ideas constituted the basis for a new classification of the language sciences, which paid due regard to the various aspects of language study that had formerly been the domain of separate disciplines. In as-Sakkākī's scheme the *ʿilm al-'adab* came to comprise all language sciences.

At the same time, the intrusion of the Muʿtazila in the science of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh* "principles of law" led to the analysis of the relationship between form and meaning from a different angle. The fundamental need in Islamic society to extract legal rulings from the revealed text forced scholars to deal with the conditions for this process of analysis and interpretation. The resulting theory of referentiality became an autonomous approach to language and text that remained largely independent of the mainstream of Arabic linguistics. This theory became institutionalized in the discipline of the *waḍʿ al-luġa* "givenness of language", which aimed at the analysis of the relationship between the expressions and the pre-existent meanings for which they had been established.

From the point of view of the historiographer the most fascinating aspect of the development of the science of language in the Arabic world is the perseverance of the dichotomy of *lafẓ/maʿnā* in spite of a constantly changing perspective in the use of *maʿnā*. The representatives of all different approaches continued to cling to the original terminology, which dates back to the first attempts to understand the text of the *Qur'ān*. Apparently, they were not bothered by the variety of meanings in which the term *maʿnā* was used and made no effort to clarify and demarcate these various usages but incorporated the term in their own system, as if its meaning was something self-evident that needed no justification. Incidentally, in this respect they do not differ that much from linguists in any period and tradition. It is surprising how easily the term 'meaning' is often used without any specification in studies on linguistic theory or speech production.

Although mainstream Arabic linguistics continued to operate in its own paradigm of strict adherence to the formal issues of Arabic syntax and the theory of government and dependency, critics of this theory did not fail to point out the linguists' lack of interest in semantic aspects and they were

sometimes successful in introducing new points of view in the central core of the discipline. Some scholars, such as al-Ǧurǧānī, attempted to solve the problem by integrating both approaches into one system, others, like Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 809/1406) deplored the lack of interest in anything more than sterile discussions about the form and construction of words:

> "as for those who occupy themselves with the writings of the later grammarians, which contain nothing but syntactic laws and are devoid of the poetry and the speech of the Arabs, they know very little of this linguistic habit ... and you find that they believe they have reached a certain level in Arabic, whereas in reality they are farther removed from it than anybody else" (*'ammā l-muḫāliṭūn li-kutub al-muta'aḫḫirīna l-'āriya 'an ḏālika 'illā min al-qawānīn an-naḥwiyya muǧarradatan 'an 'aš'ār al-'Arab wa-kalāmihim fa-qalla mā yaš'urūna li-ḏālika bi-'amr hāḏihi l-malaka ... fa-taǧiduhum yaḥsibūna 'annahum qad ḥaṣalū 'alā rutba fī lisān al-'Arab wa-hum 'ab'ad an-nās 'anhu*, Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Muqaddima* 561)

Ibn Ḫaldūn's complaint may well be characteristic of the general atmosphere in Islamic al-'Andalus, since it is there that we find the most fundamental critic of the entire discipline, Ibn Maḍā' of Cordoba (d. 592/1196). In his *Kitāb ar-radd 'alā n-nuḥāt* "Book of the refutation of the grammarians" he rejected the basis of conventional grammatical theory by denying man's ability to determine the cause or governor of anything through the system of grammatical analogy. Since it would be blasphemous for human beings to try to understand God's purpose, the Ẓāhirites, as the theological school to which Ibn Maḍā' belonged was called, made a careful distinction between the meaning of the word or category (*ma'nā*) and the intention of the speaker (*maqṣūd*). The most important representative of the school, the logician and theologian Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) explains about the imperative that "its intention is a meaning specified by its consonants and its pattern, which is nothing else than what the addressee is being ordered to do" (*wa-ṣaḥḥa 'anna l-'amr murād bihi ma'nā muḫtaṣṣ bi-lafẓihi wa-binyatihi wa-laysa ḏālika 'illā kawn mā ḫūṭiba bihi l-ma'mūr*, *'Iḥkām* I, 261.9–10). In other words, if God uses an imperative in the *Qur'ān* its manifest meaning is that you are ordered to do something, notwithstanding all efforts of exegetes to make it seem otherwise. According to Ibn Maḍā' the linguist has to rely on his common sense to understand the obvious meaning of speech (*ẓāhir al-luġa*). He concedes that in speaking speakers sometimes omit words, because they assume that the hearer will understand them anyway. But he objects to the reconstruction of underlying levels by the grammarians in their effort to explain the surface structure, as in the example we saw above, **ḍarabtu zaydan ḍarabtuhu* "I hit Zayd, I hit him". According to Ibn Maḍā'

logically such deleted words are either present in the mind of the speaker, or absent. But they cannot be present, because when they are added to the utterance, it becomes incorrect. Therefore, they must be absent in the mind of the speaker. This means, however, that the grammarian attributes something to the speaker without any right or reason. Ibn Maḍā' concludes:

> "It is clearly wrong to posit additions to the speech of the speakers without any indication, but there is no punishment attached to that. As for asserting this with respect to the Book of God Almighty, Who cannot be touched by falsehood, neither in front nor from behind, and claiming additional meanings in it without any proof or reason … it is a sin to say so for whoever believes this" *(wa-ddiʿā' az-ziyāda fī kalām al-mutakallimīn min ġayr dalīl ʿalayhā ḫaṭa' bayyin, lākinnahu lā yataʿallaqu bi-ḏālika ʿiqāb, wa-'ammā ṭard ḏālika fī Kitāb Allāh taʿālā allaḏī lā ya'tīhi l-bāṭil min bayna yadayhi wa-lā min ḫalfihi wa-ddiʿā' ziyāda maʿānin fīhi min ġayr ḥuǧǧa wa-lā dalīl… fa-l-qawl bi-ḏālika ḥarām ʿalā man tabayyana lahu ḏālika*, Ibn Maḍā', *Radd* 81.9–15)

With this approach we have come full circle: just like the earliest commentators of the *Qur'ān*, the Ẓāhirites relied on their native linguistic intuition to interpret the meaning of God's word and rejected any effort to go beyond empirical observation and devise a system of formal rules in order to interpret language and text.

9. Suggestions for further reading

1. General introductions to the Arabic grammatical tradition may be found in Versteegh (1987); Bohas, Guillaume & Kouloughli (1990); Owens (1988; with special emphasis on the comparison with modern linguistic theory); Itkonen (1991:125–63). Carter (1968) is the most useful manual for those who wish to acquaint themselves with the syntactic and morphological theories of the grammarians from the texts themselves. For biographical and bibliographical details about the authors mentioned here one may consult Sezgin (1984).

There is hardly any general literature on semantics in the Arabic tradition. Frank (1981) is a good introduction, but in spite of its title, it does not deal with the role of *maʿnā* in technical grammar, for which the fundamental discussion in Bohas & Guillaume (1984:23–56) may be consulted. Some general remarks about the relationship between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* are found in Kouloughli (1983) and in Owens (1988:227–64, ch. IX "Syntax, semantics and pragmatics").

2. The hermeneutic principles of Qur'ānic interpretation are dealt with by

Wansbrough (1977), Gilliot (1990; the later period) and, with special emphasis on the connection between exegesis and early grammar, Versteegh (1993). 'Abū 'Ubayda's treatment of the difference between form and meaning is analyzed by Elmagor (1979) and Heinrichs (1984); for the connection between *maǧāz* and *ittisāʿ* see Versteegh (1990). For the allegorical and symbolical interpretation of the *Qur'ān* by Islamic mystics Goldziher (1920:180–262) is still fundamental.

3. On the development of Kufan and Basran grammar see Talmon (1985, 1990 and forthcoming). On the relationship between Sībawayhi and his predecessors in the Basran tradition: Carter (1968); on the complicated manuscript tradition of the *Kitāb Sībawayhi*: Humbert (1995); on the reception of the *Kitāb*: Bernards (1993). There are some studies on Kufan grammar, in particular al-Farrā''s methods: Dévényi (1990a, b) may be used as an introduction. Valuable observations about the difference between the terminology used by al-Farrā' and Sībawayhi in Owens (1990). Sībawayhi's system of syntactic structure of the Arabic language is dealt with by Mosel (1975); on *maʿnā* in Sībawayhi see Carter (1968:212ff.).

4. A fundamental analysis of the notion of *'iḍmār* is given by Ayoub (1990). On the relationship between *taqdīr* and *maʿnā* see Baalbaki (1979), Gruntfest (1984) and Versteegh (1994); Owens' comparison between Arabic linguistic theory and modern generative/transformational grammar (1988:220–26) is thought-provoking. For insightful discussion of the use of *maʿānī* in the sense of syntactic function see Ermers (1995:109–132).

5. On the debate about the priority of *lafẓ* or *maʿnā* see Heinrichs (1969) and van Gelder (1982). The literature about the discussions between logicians and grammarians in the 3rd-4th/8th-9th centuries is extensive; Mahdi (1970) is essential reading on this subject. See also Elamrani-Jamal (1983:61–71); Endreß (1986). The Arabic text of the debate between Mattā ibn Yūnus and as-Sīrāfī is given by at-Tawḥīdī (*Kitāb al-'imtāʿ wa-l-mu'ānasa*, 108.5–128.19); it was translated into French by Elamrani-Jamal (1983:149–63) and into German by Endreß (1986:238–70). Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's treatise on the difference between logic and grammar was translated into German by Endreß (1986:272–96) and into French by Elamrani-Jamal (1983:187–97). An analysis of the ideas of the 'Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafā' on language and speech is given in van den Heuvel (1988). For the logico-linguistic theories of al-Fārābī see Haddad (1969); for those of al-Ġazzālī see Gätje (1974).

6. An extensive analysis of the integration of linguistic disciplines in the *'ilm al-'adab* is given by Moutaouakil (1982). Al-Ǧurǧānī has become the focus of interest of a number of publications: Baalbaki (1983), Versteegh (1992), Owens (1988:227–64), Larkin (1995); cf. also Sezgin (1984:10–11). As-Sakkākī's *'ilm al-ma'ānī* is dealt with by Simon (1993). On the semantic/syntactic theories of Ibn Hišām see Gully (1991). In a number of articles Larcher (e.g., 1990, 1992, 1993) has drawn attention to the pragmatic aspects of later Arabic grammar.

7. There is a large literature on the development of Mu'tazilī thought (cf. e.g. Peters [1976] and on the role of the Mu'tazila in the *miḥna* inquisition Nawas [1993]), but their linguistic ideas have not yet been treated in any monograph; for aspects of Mu'tazilī linguistics see Carter (1984), Versteegh (1977:154–61). The notion of *ma'nā* in Mu'tazilite philosophy is dealt with by Frank (1967; see also his later remarks 1981:259, n. 1) and Heemskerk (1995:72–86). The infiltration of the Mu'tazila into the science of law is dealt with by Makdisi (1984); their role in the discipline of linguistics in the 4th century is discussed by Versteegh (forthcoming). Moutaouakil's above mentioned book on the disciplinary divisions into Islam (1982) also discusses the emergence of the *'uṣūl al-fiqh*. There are a few monographs in Arabic on the ideas of the *'uṣūliyyūn* (e.g., 'Abd al-Ġaffār 1981; Ǧamāl ad-Dīn 1980). The semiotic theories in the specialized treatises on the *waḍ' al-luġa* are analyzed by Weiss (1966), a fundamental work on this discipline; the same author also wrote a series of articles (e.g., 1976, 1984) on various aspects of these theories.

8. On Ibn Maḍā' and the Ẓāhirī point of view in the study of language see Arnaldez (1956) and Wolfe (1984), as well as Ḍayf's (1982) introduction to the edition of the *Radd*.

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Meaning in four linguistic traditions: a comparison

1. Introduction

In this chapter, we shall briefly compare the main results of the previous discussions. In the separate treatises on the four linguistic traditions, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, and Arabic. only those factors were taken into account which contributed to developments in the sphere of semantics within each cultural context. The links between the four traditions over the centuries were not discussed. In this chapter, emphasis will not be on borrowing or direct influence either, but we shall compare views about exegesis and semantics that were developed more or less independently in each tradition. The agreements can be explained to a large extent by similarities of the cultural contexts at large.

It will appear that in all four traditions the necessity of interpreting canonical texts (exegesis) precipitated the growth of linguistic awareness, and ultimately led to the emergence of semantics (Section 2). The role and nature of these canonical texts is explained in Section 3. Section 4 deals with linguistic thought as evinced by the canonical texts themselves. Notably, etymology is a commonly used device. The fact that these authoritative texts themselves devote attention to language helps legitimate later linguistic activities.Turning from the pre-theoretical linguistics found in the canonical texts themselves to their 'metatexts', we discuss the nature of ancient exegesis, and the development of a canon of exegetical rules in Section 5. Important contributions to the development of linguistic and particularly semantic theory (as opposed to pre-theoretical procedures) were often made by scholars from other disciplines, like logic and rhetoric. They especially stimulated interest in the relationship between language, thought, reality and knowledge (Section 6).

The next four sections are devoted to elements of semantic theory that are shared by, or at least discussed in, all four traditions. They are the precise locus of meaning (Section 7), the lack of one-to-one correspondence between forms and 'meanings' (Section 8), the essential nature and origin of language

(Section 9), and the consequences of contact between different languages, in particular the question of translation (Section 10). Finally, there is an issue on which the four traditions strongly diverge: the status of the exegesis (Section 11).

2 From Exegesis to Semantics

There is one circumstance that may justly be regarded as universal for the development of semiotics and semantics: the all-pervasive human need for guidelines in a baffling and terrifying world, which invests communication with divine powers with an urgency unequalled in interhuman communication. Initially, signs were 'read into' the perceptible world, natural and meteorological phenomena (water, vegetation, earthquakes, lightning), the movements and changes of the sun, moon and stars, and human experience at large, for example dreams. Once these phenomena are identified as a locus for signs, they provide a much-needed sense of security and of potential control over one's life. Making sense of the world around us and deciphering its meaning in such a way that our interpretation can form a basis for decision-making, is part of the earliest semiotic enterprise.

But there is another, more direct, channel of communication with the divine powers, and that is language. In some cases the gods address mankind directly by a revelation in human language. These revelations can take the form of verbal oracles (as opposed to non-linguistic signs), prophecies or inspired utterances, but in all cases they need to be interpreted and contextualized in order for them to have any practical application. Not only do the gods use language to establish contact with mankind, there are also human attempts to placate or influence the gods through linguistic, i.e. verbal address. Rituals and prayers, to be used by the loyal members of the community, or to a specialized group within it, are the carefully transmitted verbal expressions of these attempts. Their authors may be thought to be especially gifted or divinely inspired human beings, or a divinity, or the rituals and prayers may even be regarded as absolutely eternal and authorless. And, finally, there are accounts providing truthful insight in the relation of mankind with the realm of the divine, and its position in the universe. All of these require preservation, transmission and, once again, careful exegesis. Only in this way can they be effective (as in the case of prayers and rituals), or constitute a reliable compass for human beings to navigate by.

Thus, the communication between mankind and the divine, couched in

human language, is a major factor in the historical development of a concept of semantics. This is where semiotics, the theory of signs, begins to narrow down to textual or linguistic exegesis, the interpretation of the verbal sign. This form of language-oriented exegesis stimulates the emergence of semantics, the theory of meaning. The development of a text-independent discipline of linguistics is yet a further step.

3 The Role of Canonical Texts

The four linguistic traditions studied in this book were selected because all four of them are linked with a (religious or primarily secular) canonical text. In all four traditions the oral or written transmission of these texts was reliable enough for a gap to open between their faithfully preserved archaic language and the daily usage of their readers or hearers. Since understanding these texts was felt to be vital, whether for religious or cultural reasons, this linguistic state of affairs necessitated interpretation. This was necessary anyway, since especially the Sanskrit, Hebrew and Arabic traditions had to deal with a revealed text that in addition to its archaic language also contained large numbers of obscure passages and at times mystic utterances, as was to be expected on the basis of its sacred nature. At a very early date commentators in these traditions became aware of the fact that what is said or written may not always be identical with what is meant, and that the common believers need interpreters to help them understand the divine message. In Greece, of course, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do not have the status of a revealed text, but the role of the epic singer can be compared to that of a visionary teacher. Epic poetry made a strong claim to having and providing a unique insight in the truth. Besides, Homer embodies the oldest Greek tradition and is an extremely important factor in the Greek sense of national and cultural identity. Greek respect for things ancient, and the connection between poetry and education, which made Homer's words relevant to the conduct of everyday life, led to a rich exegetical practice, perhaps not to the same degree as in the Arabic, Hebrew and Sanskrit cultures, but certainly to a comparable one.

In this light it is not surprising that a more detailed comparison of these four traditions confirms the existence of numerous parallels in the development of exegetical traditions and an awareness of linguistic or textual structure. In itself this would not warrant any claim to having discovered universal conditions for the development of semantic theory—in fact, that would amount to a *petitio principii*. But the conditions shared by the four societies

in question clearly contributed to the formation of semantic theory. To that extent, the comparative study of these four traditions tests, and in this case confirms, our instinctive presuppositions.

The oldest literature in all four traditions consists of the codification of the texts that were felt to be basic to the societies in which they originated. The earliest available collection of Vedic texts is the *Ṛgveda*. To guarantee the complete reliability of its oral transmission complex systems of recitation were developed, in such a way that in practice the entire text is available in three basic versions: a continuous version in which the words are recited with *sandhi*, i.e. with the euphonic changes occasioned by neighbouring words, a word-for-word version in which these euphonic changes are left out, and a step-by-step version in which they are alternately applied between two words only. The text is fully mastered only if one can recite the three versions, which serve as a check on each other's correctness. The reciter is required to focus on the linguistic form only, and need not be able to understand and interpret the texts he recites. Interpretation is a separate discipline. The reliability of the textual transmission was probably greatly enhanced by this exclusion of any interference of interpretation.

In the Hebrew tradition writing clearly was conceived of as integral to the religious and cultural experience of the ancient Judeans. The *Torah*, the Five Books of Moses, as well as the books of the Prophets and the Hagiographa, are not only a form of religious expression but also a means of passing on a heritage of practice and beliefs from one generation to the next. The Hebrew Bible is to be read as the actual Word of God, but at the same time it is also the founding document for interpretation and illustration of religious and ethical norms in later times.

In the case of the sacred book of the Arabic tradition, the *Qur'ān*, the first task of the Muslim exegetes was to establish a *ne varietur* text that could serve as the point of departure for exegesis. This task was felt to be so important that one of the first caliphs, 'Uṯmān, made it an official policy to impose the codified text on the entire Muslim community.

Homer's place in Greek society was mentioned above. Bridging the gap in vocabulary and grammar was the first task of the Greek exegete dealing with *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but Homer's influence went much further than that and he was consulted as a source of knowledge on history, military matters, medicine, ethics and many other things. Greek tradition could also boast old collections of oracles like those of Musaeus, victim of one of the earliest attempts at forgery when Onomakritos tried to make his fake-oracles pass

for the real thing (Herodotus, *Histories* VII, 6). Orphic (religious) accounts of the world's origin were commented upon at least from the 4th century BCE (Derveni Papyrus).

4 Beginnings of Linguistic Thought within Canonical Texts—Etymology

Interestingly, linguistic thought often begins with these canonical texts themselves. The oldest Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Greek texts show a linguistic awareness on the part of their divine or human authors, especially of the fact that the linguistic message may contain information about extra-linguistic reality. Names in particular were usually felt to be significant and their meanings were explained and commented on in the texts of the Sanskrit tradition (*Brāhmaṇa*-texts and *Nirukta*), the Bible, and Homer alike. These intra-textual interpretations of the correlation between language and extra-linguistic reality constitute the starting-point for a long tradition of etymology, which is legitimized by the practice of the authoritative texts themselves.

In at least the Sanskrit, Hebrew and Greek traditions etymologies seem to serve the same end: to get a better grip on a contemporary concept. In the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, etymologizing is an accepted exegetical and literary device to reach a derived interpretation for a name or word. Apparently, it was not regarded as conflicting with the idea that every single element of the *Torah* embodies its own meaning in accordance with the Talmudic dictum: "The omission or the addition of one letter might mean the destruction of the whole world" (Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 13a). Similarly, it is stated in the New Testament: "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). Each written character and each combination of characters into names and words contains a hidden core of meaning which can become manifest through hermeneutic argumentation. Illustrative is Rabbi Akiba b. Joseph (2nd century CE), who is described as "expounding upon each dot heaps and heaps of halakhic regulations". The vital point is, of course, that the text itself is left intact by etymological and other exegetical procedures. The above-mentioned dicta demonstrate in a dogmatic way the authority of the *Torah* in its orthographical completeness, asserting at the same time its status as the sole basis of any exegetical activity, including etymology. In the Arabic tradition—perhaps because of the greater morphological transparency of the language—etymology in the sense of a diachronic

method was never developed. Interestingly, when the early Arab commentators wished to explain some of the proper names in the *Qur'ān* (e.g., Isaac, Jacob) they borrowed their etymology from the Jewish tradition; etymology as a truth-finding device was almost non-existent in the indigenous tradition.

In India, the interpretative strategy of etymology and the view that the transmitted text is eternal and to be taken literally are usually not confronted directly with each other: these ideas are adhered to by different exegetical traditions.

In no tradition is etymologizing motivated by a purely historical interest in the development of words. Meaning is what is given for the author; it is the stable factor. The question is how this meaning can be illustrated by forming semantic equivalents from the given form of a name. The epistemological value of language was one of the most urgent questions for anyone dealing with linguistic utterances and it was to be a constant factor in later theoretical developments.

5. Exegesis

Not only do the authoritative texts themselves show an interest in linguistic matters, they also rapidly turn into objects of interpretation in their own right. Guidance for the conduct of life, spiritual, educational or otherwise, is now sought in their contents. Understanding the meaning of the message is therefore vital. In the Sanskrit, Hebrew and Arabic traditions, exegetical needs explain the first explicit remarks on the 'meaning' of these texts. In the Greek context, too, lexicography and paraphrase were used as early means to grasp the meaning of an increasingly archaic text. Interestingly, the authoritative nature of the codified texts bestows authority on their linguistic expression as well: they become a source and norm of linguistic correctness. This is particularly obvious in the Arabic tradition in which the revealed book is not only inspired by God, but regarded as being His literal word, which lends an authority to the language of the *Qur'ān* that no other text can share. The unimpeachable status of Biblical Hebrew is equally obvious. In the Greek and Sanskrit traditions the situation may seem more complex in the sense that the norm of linguistic correctness was to a considerable extent defined by the language of the well-educated of a period when the authoritative texts were already (slightly) archaic. But a construction in Homer that would be condemned in 'correct' later-day Attic would still be defended as an ornamental enrichment by his commentators; Homer was beyond criticism.

All traditions develop explicit exegetical rules (as opposed to semantic concepts, which tend to arise only later). If adhered to, they guarantee a (more) valid interpretation. One idea, made explicit in the Sanskrit, Hebrew and Greek traditions, is that the text should be its own interpreter: The Veda is best explained from the Veda, the Bible from the Bible, Homer from Homer, but also Hippocrates from Hippocrates etc. Explicit formulations of this rule date from the 1st century BCE (rules of Hillel); 2nd century CE (Galen); 3rd century CE (Porphyry)—it remains disputed whether Aristarchus (2nd century BCE) ever formulated it, but he certainly did apply the principle.

Sometimes, the idea of the intrinsic value of an author for his own clarification is combined with other factors: both Hebrew (Saadiah) and Greek theories formulate 'Kriterien der Sprachrichtigkeit': analogy (or any rational criterium based on regularity or systems of rules), usage (of the author in question, or educated usage contemporary to the exegete), and the weight of tradition (older linguistic authorities, insights defended by scholarly predecessors). Likewise, the Arab linguists distinguished between *ʿaql*, rational arguments about the correctness of linguistic forms, and *naql*, the authoritative sources of Arabic: the language of the *Qur'ān*, the pre-Islamic poems, and the idealized language of the pure Bedouin. In spite of their fondness of reasoning, they all acknowledged the primacy of the attested forms in the corpus.

On the textual level, a basic exegetic principle is a fundamental respect for the text. If it is obscure, that must be due to failure on the part of the exegete. The linguistic form of the text is not to be tampered with. This principle is perhaps obvious where religious texts are concerned, but Greek scholars in Alexandria demonstrate the same sensitivities—their proposals for textual change were made in the margin. The text itself was left 'intact' for later scholars to try their hand at.

On the other hand, the linguistic form might be such that some sort of supplementing seemed called for, in order for a complete sense to become available. The Arabic principles of *'iḍmār* "hiding" by the speaker, and its correlate of *taqdīr* "reconstruction" by the grammarian correspond to the frequent Greek remarks in commentaries of the form *hupakoustéon* "one must hear x with this", or *elleípetai tò* ... "... is missing". To a certain extent, this is comparable to the Rabbinic expression *dereḵ qezārāh* "a short way", a term for abridged sayings or elliptic passages in the Hebrew Bible which are to be completed by an exegetical clarification. In the 11th century

CE, the grammarian Ibn Ǧanāḥ discussed the use of tropes in the Biblical text, cases where a word is used or, in the case of ellipse, omitted, for stylistic or rhetorical reasons. However, the question always remains up to what point a difficulty in the text should be explained by an appeal to ellipse. Therefore, most Jewish linguists refrain from applying this principle and accept the explanations found in the earlier exegetical tradition.

Each tradition has to face the question whether a text is at all times to be taken literally, or whether metaphorical or allegorical interpretations are admitted as well. Can the text be made to say things which it does not make explicit? The device of a deeper meaning is especially useful when the superficial one is in any way offensive, obscure, awkward or absurd; the 'new' meaning will support the (preconceived) views of the exegete. An awareness of different layers of meaning can be traced back to pre-theoretical exegetical practice (e.g. Greece, 5th century BCE); it forms a continuous point of debate in every tradition discussed in this book. In the Sanskrit tradition, the *Brāhmaṇa*-texts and the *Nirukta* both work with etymologizing to arrive at a derived meaning. In contrast with this, the ritualistic-exegetical tradition (Mīmāṁsā) argues that the text of the eternal Veda has to yield its meaning without human interference. For the Mīmāṁsā, there is no hidden intention of the author, because there is no author, neither a human nor a divine one, of the text of the Vedas. It is authoritative of its own accord, not on the basis of anything external to it. The Mīmāṁsā wants to stick to the literal meaning of words wherever possible, and resorts to secondary ones only if there is no other way to make sense of a passage. In Islam the tension between the "obvious meaning" (*ẓāhir*) and the "hidden meaning" (*bāṭin*) of the text was exploited by scores of mystical commentaries on the *Qur'ān*, some of whom went so far as to deny the value of the literal text, which was regarded by them as a mere symbol of the hidden intention of God.

In the traditions that have to deal with religious texts, the exegetical enterprise is closely interwoven with theological concerns. In the Arabic tradition, for instance, the ambiguity of certain passages in the *Qur'ān* lends itself easily to an anthropomorphical interpretation that was abhorrent to orthodox Islam. In these cases the acumen of the exegetes was needed to make sense of utterances that might otherwise have led to heresy of the worst kind. Similarly, the Homeric presentation of the anthropomorphical world of the Olympic gods was offensive to later philosophical and religious sensitivities. Defusion of its dangerous implications required a consistent exegetical effort.

6 Beginnings of semantic theory—influence from other disciplines—distinction of sound and meaning

In all four traditions a theoretical framework of semantics emerges, tending towards greater explicitness and sophistication if the tradition does not restrict itself to purely exegetical questions, i.e., if linguistic and semantic questions come to be discussed in their own right. The Hebrew tradition is so closely wedded to the interpretation of the sacred texts that semantic theoretical concepts mostly remain implicit: they do not develop into independent topics of scholarly research.

Theoretical reflection was strongly stimulated by contributions from disciplines that were not primarily concerned with exegesis, but involved in speculations about the relationship between language and thought, sometimes under the influence of a foreign model. In the Greek and Arabic traditions new impulses came from logicians, dialecticians, rhetoricians and students of law. On the Greek side, a theoretical awareness of language, its functions and meaning, was promoted by two factors, namely the *philosophical* reactions to the world-view presented by the epic poets, problematizing the relationship between language, reality and knowledge, and, secondly, the development of the *city-state* with its emphasis on public decision-making and (political, legal and social) communication and persuasion. In the Sanskrit tradition, theoretical awareness of problems concerning language and semantics was very much stimulated by discussions between those who accepted the Veda as valid and those who did not (Buddhists and Jainas). Quite divergent systems of philosophy (and in addition systems of grammar and logic) developed among the Brahmins, Buddhists and Jainas.

Semantic reflection tends to focus on the relationship between language, reality and knowledge. The question whether there is any lesson to be learned from language, i.e. the epistemological significance of language was one of the most urgent. Does language directly reflect or represent entities in extra-linguistic reality (which are therefore its 'meaning')? We already saw the relevance of this concept in pre-theoretical etymological practice, but it was also explored in more theoretically oriented discussions. Early on, distinctions were drawn between 'meaningless strings of sound', 'words', and 'sentences/propositions'; or, more general, between utterances *qua* sound and *qua* meaning. But even before that, scholars alternated between an instinctive belief in the identity of words and objects, on the one hand, and the realization that these two realms are distinct. In this context, Sanskrit, Hebrew,

Greek and Arabic scholars have hit—to all appearances independently—on some form of the paradox: What you say goes through your mouth—You say (a) wagon—Therefore, a wagon goes through your mouth (or: you say fire—thus you will burn your mouth). The Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini (ca. 4th century BCE) devoted one rule in his grammar to the distinction between linguistic forms which denote no more than their own form (forms, in other words, which are 'mentioned'), and those having an extra-linguistic referent (forms which are 'used'). In Greco-Roman antiquity, an explicit distinction between 'use' and 'mention' can only be attributed with certainty to Augustine (4th century CE).

In the next four sections, we will discuss those elements in semantic theories that play a role in all four traditions. They are the locus of meaning (Section 7), the presence or absence of a one-to-one correspondence between form and meaning (Section 8), the nature and origin of language (Section 9), and the consequences of contacts between different languages, notably ideas about translation (Section 10).

7 The locus of meaning

The speculations of logicians and philosophers brought about a formal interest in the status of 'meaning'. Intuitively, one would say that there is a limit to the number of possible elements in any semantic theory, and all four traditions seem to have been aware of most of them at some stage. 'Meaning' can be located in extra-linguistic reality, in the linguistic form, in the speaker, or in the hearer. Accordingly, different ancient scholars identified it with the referent in the extra-linguistic world, with the concept expressed by, subsistent on, or inherent in a word or sentence, or with the thoughts of the speaker, or his intention (as in Greek and Arabic 'speech-act' theories). Alternatively, meaning may be described as 'that which is grasped by the hearer'. On a more abstract level, meaning could be identified with some sort of 'universals' or 'ideas', whose ontological status is not always clear, as in Mīmāṁsā and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in the Sanskrit tradition, in Greek Neoplatonism, and in the Arabic tradition. Of course, 'meaning' is a structurally ambiguous term: words have a certain autonomous meaning, which may or may not correspond to what the speaker means, i.e. intends to say. Sanskrit *artha*, Hebrew *ʿinyān*, Greek *sēmainómenon* or *lektón*, and Arabic *maʿnā* all display a form of this ambiguity.

8. Incongruity between form and meaning

Each tradition studied here realized at one point or another that there is no one-to-one correspondence between words and things, between words and 'meanings' (as belonging to the word, or perceived by the hearer), and between words and intentions or thoughts. For instance, the Sanskrit, Greek and Arabic traditions point out discrepancies between grammatical and biological, or 'natural' gender (Bhartṛhari, Protagoras, Sībawayhi). As a result, different types of (failure in) correspondence are classified and the concepts of univocity, homonymy and synonymy develop, in various degrees of sophistication, in all traditions. Denying the existence of true synonymy can turn into an argument to defend normativity, comprising both linguistic perfection (the perfect distribution of words over things and vice versa) and the existence of ethical standards (Prodicus, al-Ǧurǧānī). A natural and complete correspondence between words and things also underlies ideas about onomatopoeia and, eventually, etymology.

Strikingly, the Arabic tradition never postulated the possibility that words gave direct access to knowledge of the world, and the one example of a scholar, 'Abbād ibn Sulaymān, who stated that there was a 'natural relationship' between words and their meaning, remains an isolated incident in the history of the tradition.

9. The nature and origin of language

Ideas about (deficient) linguistic economy usually go hand in hand with theories about the essential nature and origin of language: Is it created by God, or does God use an imperfect, human language as an instrument of communication, which is therefore subject to the same need for interpretation, based on the same rules, as ordinary language? The first point appears in the Hebrew, Greek and Arabic traditions, the second in the Hebrew and Arabic ones, as in Maimonides' version of language's conventionality, or the Mu'tazilite ideas about the nature of speech. In the Hebrew and Christian traditions, language is given by man, although God already knows every name. In this respect language is the product of God's creative power only, but later Jewish scholars often referred to Gen. 2:19-20, a passage which suggests that language was invented by Adam, the first man: "So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called

every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field''. Likewise, Muslim scholars referred to the Qur'ānic verse (2:31) ''and He taught Adam all the names'' when they wished to demonstrate the divine origin of language.

A related question is whether there was an original rational perfection to language, that came to be corrupted over time. Such a concept of the imperfection of actual speech as opposed to its pristine and original perfection is strongly present in the Greek tradition. Medieval Hebrew tradition also knew many supporters of the view that none other than God had created language, in particular Hebrew language, as a pure, superior medium that lacked shortcomings like foreign loan-words and irregular word order. A counterpart to the divine and perfect origin of language appears in Epicurus' views (3rd century BCE), as part of his programme to eliminate fear of the gods: he conceives of language as a purely human product, a part of human evolution, a conventional system of signs, refined over time but with the humble and primitive beginnings of animal-like utterances. In the Arabic tradition, which regards the Arabic language as the most perfect language on earth anyway, the only corruption of speech imaginable is the faulty pronunciation of the language in the mouths of foreigners and illiterate people. The language itself is not affected by any change.

Speculations about the nature and origin of language are also found in the Sanskrit tradition from the earliest texts (*Ṛgveda*) onwards. As mentioned before, the Mīmāṁsā school held the Vedas to be eternal and authorless, and thus disposed of the problem of the origin of language and the sacred texts.

10. Contacts between languages—translations

When contacts between languages developed, the question of mutual understanding and, eventually, translation arose. The Stoics insisted that meaning was what a 'barbarian', i.e. someone who did not speak Greek, could not grasp, even though he could hear the words. This seems to imply that meaning is directly connected to linguistic form, and is not a matter of the 'intention of the speaker'. Interestingly, the opposite view is found in the Arabic world: al-Ǧāḥiẓ claimed that the meanings were common to both Arabs and non-Arabs, but that the non-Arabs simply had no command of the relevant formal system. In the debate between logicians and grammarians that dominated the intellectual scene in the Islamic world in the 9th century, the logicians claimed that the realm of the (universal) meanings was the domain of

logic, whereas the grammarians should limit themselves to the study of the forms of an individual language alone.

The first major translation project in the Greek world was that of the *Septuagint* (2nd century BCE); this did not occasion any theory of translation, since the Greek end-result itself was regarded as divinely inspired. Judaism generally accepted Greek as a language of divine inspiration with reference to Gen. 9:27: "God enlarged Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem", explained by Bar Kappara in *Genesis Rabbah* 36,8 as a permission to utter the words of the *Torah* in the language of Japheth (sc. Greek) in the tents of Shem, i.e. Israel. Rabbi Judan added that from this it is taught that a translation of the Hebrew Bible in Greek is permitted, a recognition of the *Septuagint*.

In Islam, the *Qur'ān* was held to be untranslatable altogether, or rather, the whole concept of translation seemed—aptly enough—'meaningless'. In the early Sanskrit tradition the problem of 'translation' did not occur with regard to the Vedic texts, because the language in which the texts were discussed and explained (mainly by and for the sake of those belonging to the priestly caste) was sufficiently close to the language of the authoritative text. It did occur in the Buddhist tradition, whose founder reportedly said that his message should be transmitted to the people in their own language/dialect. From the 2nd century CE onwards, the spread of Buddhism over large areas of Central, East and Southeast Asia gave rise to enormous translation projects to render the Sanskrit versions of Buddhist scriptures into languages such as Tibetan and Chinese.

In Roman theory, the question is tackled what it is that is translated: words, or 'meanings', taken as the intention of the author. Cicero and Horace (1st century BCE), Seneca (1st century CE) and Jerome (4th century CE) generally defended the latter. They rejected isomorphic translations of single words and word-for-word translations of longer passages. In the Jewish tradition Saadiah (9th/10th century CE) and Maimonides similarly defended a translation of the sense of the text and the intention of its author, against adversaries who favoured a more literalistic approach.

Apart from translation theory, various other types of linguistic observation resulted from a familiarity with different languages. It also provided scholars with a helpful metalanguage, particularly when grammarians took a prestigious other culture as a model for their own discipline. For instance, Hebrew grammarians laid the foundations for the comparative study of the Semitic languages by their comparisons of Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic. Latin

grammarians, who generally had Greek grammar for their model, used Greek as a matter of course, e.g. in explaining Latin homonyms by providing the Greek equivalents for the different meanings involved.

Another result of intercultural contact was that theories about language and logic—and a fair amount of terminology—were directly taken over: much technical Greek literature was preserved and translated by the Arabs (e.g. al-Fārābī's work on Aristotle), and passed on to Hebrew scholars when they came into contact with Arab culture in Muslim Spain. The Sanskrit and Greek grammarians, on the other hand, were almost completely self-contained in this respect.

11. An area of disagreement: The status of exegesis

We shall end this comparison by briefly touching upon an intriguing area in which the four traditions studied here evince important differences: the status of the exegesis. How stable was the edifice of a once-established meaning? It is the Hebrew tradition in particular that stands out here.

The Hebrew concept of an 'oral *Torah*' as part of God's revelation has no Greek or Arabic equivalent. Oral *Torah* was believed to have been given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19). It is regarded as implicitly present in all the teachings of Moses before the community of Israel. The teaching rabbi himself represents a continuation of the revelation of the *Torah* to the people at Sinai. This means that the creation of what could be called new *Torah* was not restricted by theological objections. On the contrary, new elements in regulation and exegesis leading to a 'rewritten' or 'retold' Bible were incorporated as creative, positive forces of teaching and explaining in the current tradition of Judaism.

The oral *Torah* was the instrument of rabbis and scholars who had to define and to perfect the directions provided by the written *Torah*. With the help of careful casuistry they further developed general precepts given in the written *Torah*, or determined new legal regulations where the written *Torah* advanced no ruling. In their treatment of legal material, the rabbis made an intensive study of the sacred text of the Hebrew Bible including historical narration. As regulations were more and more amplified, so was sacred history. The rabbis' teaching had to be in line with the text of Scripture, but this did not prevent them from innovating rules which regulated the social and religious life of the community. Their legislative power even permitted them to change and emend traditions they had received.

This concept has no complete counterpart in any of the other traditions. No Greek or Arab commentator could automatically claim to share in the same inspiration as their source text. Interestingly, this notion does make a brief appearance in Plato's *Ion*, but there the point has almost exactly the opposite effect: the rhapsode Ion, singer and interpreter of the Homeric songs, is comforted for his lack of firmly-grounded knowledge (in the full Platonic sense of the word) by having pointed out to him that he participates in something beautiful, if irrational: divine *manía*, a form of madness, the same inspiration that stimulated the poetic production itself—unfortunately, its irrational nature deprives it of all epistemological value in a dialectical discussion.

In Islam the revealed text of the *Qur'ān* is supplemented by the collected sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad (*ḥadīṯ*), which were used to build the legal edifice of Islamic law (*šarīʿa*). The legal implications of the *ḥadīṯ* were hotly debated, and their authenticity was evaluated on the basis of the transmission lines, but no textual interpretation was involved. Therefore, there was no claim on the part of the interpreters to any divine inspiration (except in the case of mystics whose interpretation was legitimized by their personal contact with God).

A concept which is somewhat similar to that of oral *Torah*, or which at least had similar implications, is that of the 'lost Veda'. According to the Mīmāṁsā system of Vedic exegesis, explicit Vedic prescriptions always take precedence over traditional customs for which there is no textual authority. However, if people who otherwise follow the Vedic prescriptions, adhere to such a traditional custom which has no support in the Vedas, one may assume that that custom is based on a lost part of the Veda. Clearly, this device turns the Vedas into a quite flexible source of authority for modern practice. Outside the Mīmāṁsā system, it happens to the present day that people claim—or are claimed—to have visions like those of the ancient Vedic seers when they created their hymns and prayers. Such claims and the texts they come down with are usually only accepted by a minority.

The concept of an oral *Torah* (and to a lesser extent that of the 'lost Veda') enhances the status of an interpretation in an unprecedented way. When one compares the Jewish, Greek and (equally Greek) early Christian traditions in this respect, the difference stands out even sharper: Greek scholarly debate had always been sharply agonistic and polemical. Scholars tended to formulate their views in stark opposition to those of their predecessors to the point of considering one's views proven if one had demolished those of the compe-

tition. Personal abuse routinely formed part of scholarly discourse. This tendency continues in the first centuries of Christianity. Christian revelation has relatively firm limits. It comprises the gospels and the works of the Apostolic fathers (which takes us roughly to the end of the 1st century CE). Differences in interpretation arising in any later period automatically imply that the line between truth and heresy had been crossed, and vitriolic reactions were to be expected. The Christian Bible's meaning is conceived of as a monolithic, stable and unfluctuating entity, which does not allow any new inspired points of view, whereas the notion of oral *Torah* and that of heresy seem incompatible. Thus, it forms a unique built-in guarantee that the exegetical framework will actually produce a 'true' interpretation and demonstrate the 'real' meaning of a text.

Chronological table

Century	Sanskrit	Hebrew	Greek/Latin	Arabic
15th BCE	authors Ṛgveda			
≀				
8th			Homer	
7th			Hesiod	
6th		Ezra		
		Nehemiah		
5th	Jaimini		Heraclitus	
	Audumbarāyaṇa		Parmenides	
	Vārṣyāyaṇi		Empedocles	
	Kautsa		Gorgias	
	Mahāvīra		Socrates	
	Yāska			
4th	Buddha		Democritus	
	Pāṇini		Herodotus	
	Vyāḍi		Thucydides	
	Vājapyāyana		Plato	
	Kātyāyana		Aristotle	
			Epicurus	
3rd			Stoa	
			Zenodotus	
			Aristophanes	
2nd	Patañjali		Aristarchus	
			Dionysius Thrax	
1st		Philo	Varro	
1st CE	Kaṇāda	Hillel		
2nd	Nāgārjuna	Rabbi Akiba	Apollonius Dyscolus	
		Rabbi Yose	Galen	
3rd	Candragomin	Rabbi Ishmael		
		Rabbi Simeon		
4th	Śabara		Jerome	
			Augustine	
5th	Bhartṛhari			
6th	Diṅnāga			
	Amarasiṃha			
7th	Dharmakīrti			Qur'ān
	Prabhākara			
	Kumārila Bhaṭṭa			
8th	Maṇḍana Miśra			Muqātil ibn
	Bhāmaha			Sulaymān
	Daṇḍin			al-Ḫalīl
				Sībawayhi
				al-Farrā'

Ct.	Sanskrit	Hebrew	Greek/Latin	Arabic
9th	Ānandavardhana			Ṯa‘lab
				al-Ǧāḥiẓ
10th	Abhinavagupta	Saadiah Gaon		Ibn as-Sarrāǧ
	Puṇyarāja	Yehudah ibn Quraysh		al-Fārābī
		David ben Abraham al-Fāsī		as-Sīrāfī
		Jacob al-Qirqisānī		Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī
		Yefet ben ‘Eli		’Iḫwān aṣ-Ṣafā’
		Samuel ben Chofni		al-Fārisī
		Menaḥem ibn Sārūq		ar-Rummānī
		Dunash ibn Labraṭ		az-Zaǧǧāǧī
		Ḥayyūǧ		al-’Azharī
				Ibn Ǧinnī
				Ibn Fāris
11th		Rashi		al-Ǧurǧānī
		Yeshuah ben Yehudah		al-Ġazzālī
		Yonah ibn Ǧanāḥ		
12th		Rashbam		az-Zamaḫšarī
		Rabbenu Tam		Ibn Maḍā’
		Abraham ibn Ezra		
		Maimonides		
		Ibn ‘Aqnīn		
13th		David ben Josef Qimḥi		as-Sakkākī
		Nahmanides		al-’Āmidī
		Ibn Falaquera		Ibn al-Ḥāǧib
				al-’Astarābāḏī
14th	Gaṅgeśa	Profiat Duran		Ibn Hišām
				al-’Īǧī
				Ibn Ḫaldūn
15th		Isaac Abravanel		
16th		J. Reuchlin		
		Obadiah Seforno		
17th	Gadādhara	A. Schultens		
	Khaṇḍadeva			
	Kauṇḍadeva			
	Dharmarāja			

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STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE SCIENCES

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The series *Studies in the History of the Language Sciences* (SiHoLS) has been established as a companion to the journal *Historiographia Linguistica.* The series intends to meet the revival of interest in the history of linguistic thought and to provide an organized reservoir of information concerning our heritage of linguistic ideas of more than two millennia. SiHoLS will publish book-length scholarly studies on (the evolution of) human reflection about the nature of language and the many ways in which it can be analyzed and used. These studies may concern particular aspects of language study, entire traditions, or special periods of their development. In addition, the series will include re-editions or entirely new translations into English of 'classic' works in the field that have been out of print for many years. These new editions will be introduced by a present-day specialist who places the book in its intellectual and socio-historical context, and highlights its significance in the evolution of our thinking about language. In this series the following volumes have been published thus far or are scheduled for publication:

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